

THE BLIND IN INDUSTRY

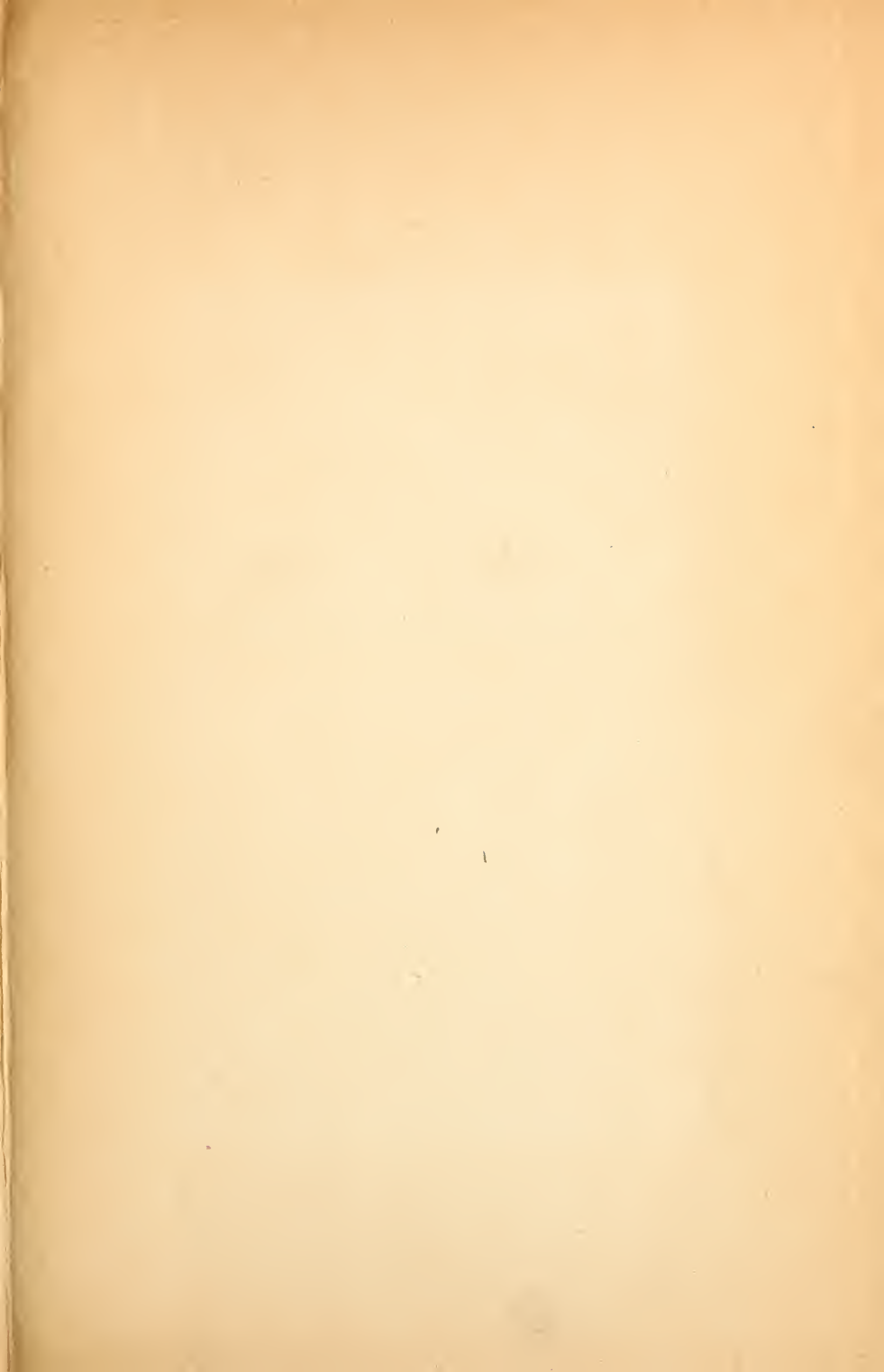
Fifty Years of Work
and Wages

BY
BEN PURSE



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THE BLIND IN INDUSTRY



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THE AUTHOR

The Blind in Industry:

Fifty Years of Work and Wages

BY

BEN PURSE

Author of "THE ECONOMICS OF INDUSTRY," "SOME COMMERCIAL
ASPECTS OF CRAFT INSTRUCTION," "THE CENSORSHIP OF
CHARITIES," "HOME TEACHING AND VISITING
OF THE ADULT BLIND," ETC., ETC.

LONDON :

EDSON (PRINTERS) LTD., 15A SPRINGDALE ROAD, N.16

1925

HV1652

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FOREWORD

WHEN I first conceived the idea of preparing this book the intention rather was to deal exhaustively with a number of problems which appear to me to demand immediate solution. It soon became apparent, however, that to adopt such a course would render it necessary to prepare a ponderous volume, the cost of which would so limit the possibilities of circulation as to make the task quite impracticable. I think, however, that sufficient will be found in the following pages to interest and attract the limited number of readers who are concerned with the employment problem; other aspects of the work can be safely left for treatment at a later date.

I have to convey my sincere thanks and appreciation to numerous friends in all parts of the country who have placed documents and information at my disposal; without such help the little book would have been of no practical value, and for that

reason I am grateful to all who have enabled me to use the data at their disposal.

If the effort I have made is in any way calculated to be helpful to those who are intimately associated with activities directed towards the amelioration of the condition of the blind, that consideration alone is ample reward for any trouble that has been taken.

The book has been prepared with infinite attention and care, and is respectfully dedicated to numerous friends and colleagues in all parts of the British Isles.

BEN PURSE

HARROW,
12th February, 1925

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

“There are some would-be leaders of men to whom all thoughts of and plans for reforms are viewed with suspicion and even abhorrence, because their names are not associated with the projected changes. They are politicians of the baser type whose personal aggrandisement means more to them than the interests of the commonwealth. By such an attitude they are obviously rendered unfit, either by character, mental attainments or disposition, to become leaders of men. They are the facetious quacks, the charlatans of the political arena.”

SOME time ago I published a series of articles under the title of “The Economics of Industry.” Judging from the number of letters of appreciation received, they were found to be generally interesting and acceptable. Many of my correspondents requested that more of this kind of literature should be placed at their disposal, and in response to their wishes, therefore, I have now been able to arrange for the publication of this little book. Some of my readers also have expressed the view that I should endeavour to examine in greater detail the basic economic considerations which found expression in the publication alluded to above, and I have attempted to comply with this request. At the same time much valuable information hitherto unpublished regarding wage conditions will be found in the following chapters. Such considerations lead me confidently to anticipate that the present work will be even more generally useful, instructive, and acceptable.

From August, 1914, and throughout the supervening war period, Europe entered upon a time of which, fortunately for civilisation, the like was never previously experienced, and I fervently hope may never again be permitted to stain our historical records. Such cataclysms are not merely attended with terrible consequences in so far as the vanquished nations are concerned, but the so-called victors are so frightfully injured in their moral and material growth that many generations must come and go ere Europe will be able to rehabilitate herself.

The economist who understands intimately the operation of the laws making for wealth production stands aghast when such diabolical tragedies are thrust upon the world; for he at least realises that the depletion of the earth's resources not only injures the conflicting nations, but that the process, of necessity, lowers the general standard of life. Nay, more than that, for it threatens the very existence of millions of innocent people who have not the remotest connection with the senseless *imbroglio*.

Every social problem towards the solution of which thoughtful men and women were devoting themselves prior to 1914, if not intensified, has, at least, been given a set-back in consequence of the war, and the position of the blind of this and every other country has been affected in the general process of arrested development. Speaking more particularly of the situation in this country, we affirm that considering the gigantic figures to which our national indebtedness has soared, the wonder is that so much has been accomplished, for it is not too much to state that from 1920 onwards there has been a consistent improvement in the general social and industrial status of the blind of the British Isles. It is quite safe to say that up to March 31st, 1923, there had been a gain on the previous corresponding financial year of at least half

a million sterling. Every substantial contribution made to our national debt renders it subsequently possible to obtain more money for the purpose of effecting social reform, and it goes without saying that, owing to the proper machinery having now been secured, the status of the blind will automatically improve. It is possible to accelerate the pace and improve the quality of the service by informative and constructive criticism, and to the furtherance of these legitimate purposes should one's best energies be directed. It is sometimes thought that because we venture to make use of a fact regarding expenditure of money upon essential services, such as the statement made above, and to adduce therefrom the contention that progress is really being registered, we are, by a mere recitation or affirmation of such a view, in effect, apologising for and palliating the present order of things. Where such an assumption is honestly made I hasten at once to assure my readers that such a deduction is altogether discountenanced and unwarranted so far as I am concerned. It is my business to deal with facts, and it will be seen clearly from subsequent utterances that my views do not differ essentially or fundamentally from those of the most radical reformer, save, perhaps, in the methods by which certain principles are to be attained and applied. All too frequently, however, one comes into contact with that type of critic who, being highly indignant with those who administer the present system, because of the evils he sees around him, has grown somewhat impatient of the speed at which we are moving, and becomes obsessed with a burning zeal to scrap all existing methods and processes and embark upon entirely new lines for which there are no precedents in the records of economic thought or in the region of historical developments. To such an one, therefore, any writer who dares to give even a modicum of credit

or appreciation to those who are honestly trying to extract the most and best out of the present system is necessarily anathema. By such superficial thinkers a man who dares thus to express himself is regarded as reactionary, though, in reality, some of these people by their methods and their practices are doing more to put back the clock than all the conservative writers or thinkers who deliver themselves on the polemics of the blind.

It must be distinctly understood, therefore, that I am not writing in the interests of any particular school of thought. The process of reasoning to which one must perforce have recourse, and the facts to be adduced are simply recorded in the service of truth, and are intended to be a contribution towards a practical solution of some present-day problems.

The theorists and demagogues who are impatient of facts and the application of the searchlight of reason on their cherished convictions, will doubtless continue to look askance at views which do not accord with the panacea they offer. But these are features in the situation by which, of all things else, I am least disturbed. I repeat, then, with emphasis, that, having regard to the unprecedented difficulties experienced by this country since the year 1914, the social and industrial conditions now obtaining in the blind community reflect a standard of progress which was not even remotely dreamed of by those who had the facts before them so recently as 1917.

It is not generally known, I have reason to believe, that after the publication of the report of the "Interdepartmental Committee on the Welfare of the Blind" the then existing war cabinet decided not to sanction the expenditure of any money in giving effect to the reforms enumerated in that document. It was only after considerable pressure had been brought to bear on the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the urgent

representations which were made to Mr. Austen Chamberlain by the late Sir Arthur Pearson and others, that sanction to expend a sum of money in the form of grants in aid of certain defined voluntary services was obtained. This development of policy marks an important milestone along the road leading to legislative enactment, and the subsequent Government proposals have laid the foundation for the accomplishment of almost every practical reform which has yet been suggested. I have already put upon record the facts up-to-date in respect of the administration of the Blind Persons Act, 1920, but for the purpose of easy reference I again summarise the results in the concluding paragraph of this chapter.

The next few years will bring greater and more permanent changes; they will be secured, not by setting aside existing machinery, but rather by extending its functions and by a process of re-adaptation, and increasing its usefulness and efficiency. The really practical work of the future will be achieved, not so much by the instrument of Imperial Government, as through the means it will provide for keeping County and County Borough Authorities cognisant of changing conditions and helping to promote a system which, while making for permanence and stability, will yet be tolerably uniform of application so as not to penalise the blind by reason of ethnological or geographical considerations. The results to which I have already referred as accruing from the administration of the Blind Persons Act are tolerably satisfactory; approximately 15,000 blind persons are in receipt of pensions under Section I of this Act, 93 per cent. of whom are receiving the full grant; thus the State is expending at least £350,000 per annum on this service. Under the Act 145 County and County Borough Authorities are responsible for the preparation of schemes all of which are now being operated

at an average yearly expenditure of £580, which means that apart from the grants made by the Local Education Authorities, a further sum of £84,100 per annum is also available through the local authorities ; in addition a grant made by the Health Ministry for essential services for the year ending March 31st, 1923, amounted to £75,244. A little arithmetical calculation, therefore, will prove that the results to date are not nearly so unsatisfactory as some people would have us believe.

CHAPTER II.

THE EVOLUTION OF PHILANTHROPY.

"The mere founding, for example, of a voluntary Society for any given purpose evolves out of the primary elements of human character the latent force of the most powerful kind, namely, the motive, the sentiment, the feeling, the passion, as it often is, of the spirit of association."
(*"The Reign of Law"*)—DUKE OF ARGYLL.

SOMEHOW or other there has grown up in the community an impression that the voluntary system is merely the result of a spasmodic act on the part of an individual or individuals. Its real historical genesis is very imperfectly understood and rarely appreciated at its intrinsic worth. Voluntaryism, as I understand it, is essentially the result of an evolutionary process, and one can no more think of attempting to annihilate that system than of disputing an established law such as that of the law of gravitation.

Writing in 1917 on the subject of "Constructive Philanthropy," I briefly summarised this historical development, and in this connection I cannot do better than reproduce some of the sentences then employed :

"The sight of sorrow and suffering has ever enkindled in the human breast a strong and persistent desire to render service on the part of those more fortunately placed.

"The ethics of practically every known philosophy, be it pagan or Christian, have warmly espoused this attribute, acclaiming it to be a basic principle of their particular plan of social salvation.

“ We are far too apt to look upon the modern expression of philanthropy, evidenced by definite organisation, as the product of our own inventive faculty rather than the specific outcome of evolutionary progress.”

Though I have consulted many books and documents dealing particularly with matters affecting the blind, it is necessary to turn specifically to the history of philanthropy in order clearly to follow the distinct lines of progressive development which began to take rise in this country in the year 1850.

It is true that some of the oldest and best-known Institutions for the Blind were called into existence long before this date, but their functions were mainly inspired and directed to the provision of a Home or an Asylum for those sightless people who were fortunate enough to gain access to their precincts.

I am discussing more particularly the process of industrial development, and this point of view must be kept clearly before the mind of the reader in perusing these pages. Philanthropic effort in an organised form takes its rise centuries before the period I am now discussing, but the important phase of the problem with which I am now concerned began to assume definite shape about the year 1850.

I have read with intense appreciation and admiration the records that are available concerning the inception of these Institutions, and whatever others may think, I, at least, feel a deep sense of gratitude and indebtedness to those early pioneers who all unconsciously laid the foundation for that great superstructure which stands pre-eminently superior to any system of caring for the blind in the known world—the system which is in operation in this country with all its limitations and defects.

Great minds in all ages have seen poignant wrongs and abuses ; quite unrestrained by considera-

tions of ease and comfort, they have determined to rid society of the particular abuse which appeared to them to loom so large ; hence, we have not merely the philanthropist, but the social reformer generally.

From the conscious humanitarian acts of the individual, then, we have slowly evolved great collective effort, which in turn expresses itself through the complex organism which is denominated society ; and now, for the most part, we are able to treat large masses of people along given lines, because we know the specific nature of the trouble by which they are confronted.

This system of treatment does not mean that those who are responsible for its administration are less conscious of the obligations which devolve upon them than would be the case if they were merely dealing with solitary units, but it does mean that the knowledge and experience acquired enable the administrator to achieve results in respect of large numbers of persons who could only heretofore have been dealt with as isolated cases.

Knowledge accumulated over a number of years has resulted in the formation of definite methods of application and treatment, and we have slowly but surely in consequence evolved from the conscious actions of individuals the still more conscious intentions and designs of the community.

Those of us whose sphere of usefulness is intimately bound up with philanthropic work must, of necessity, know the historic trend of the great movement in which we are involved if our services are destined to be of real utility. It is obvious, too, that economic problems stand in such close relationship to the domain of philanthropy, that all our intelligence and experience require to be exercised in order to prevent acts of private benevolence from unduly impinging upon or retarding the growth of a conception

of public duty and legitimate corporate responsibility.

Properly directed, philanthropy may be said to be the driving force essential to the focussing of public attention upon hitherto neglected social obligations.

There can be no real danger of confusion arising, however, if we learn to know the true functions of the machinery which we requisition for dealing with any given situation. Constantly we make administrative blunders because we only know our subject in the narrowest and most superficial sense, realising merely in the vaguest fashion the great humanitarian impulses by which it is inspired ; never even feeling those all-absorbing, all-embracing personal emotions which impel men to do things because of an exalted sense of righteousness.

It may be that not all the men and women who have responded to these high ideals are destined to find their names emblazoned on the pages of history, but the consciousness of having contributed their quota of effort towards the reduction of the world's misery brings that degree of human happiness which the possession of wealth alone may never be able to yield.

We shall find generally that the highest and best expressions of philanthropic thought and activity arise from a disposition to trust the individual. A broad spirit of tolerance and trustfulness will sometimes receive a rude shock, but oftener than otherwise these confidences will be found to have been rightly bestowed. That attitude of mind which suggests that poverty must be treated as though it were a punishable offence is absolutely foreign to the spirit and the best traditions of philanthropy. This disposition is the resultant effect of an imported spirit of callous professionalism, whose scientific contrivings appear to be specifically designed to humiliate and degrade the applicant for assistance.

That is the truest and most genuine form of philanthropy which seeks to aid the man or woman by teaching them to return service for the help they derive ; by this means alone are you ultimately able to inculcate a sense of restored independence, this being the true objective of all constructive charitable effort.

It is simply grotesque to find men who have had years of experience in charitable effort fretting and fuming because some not over-scrupulous individual has managed to obtain a paltry shilling more than a particular form of administration suggests to be necessary. By all means prevent known imposition, but do not permit every vestige of humanity to be extracted from our organisations at the dictation of people who are invariably content to remain supine to much greater administrative wrongs than those to which reference is made in this paragraph.

If the end of our philanthropic effort were simply reached by the distribution of weekly doles, such a consummation would be a most unhappy one. We know, however, that such a thesis is unthinkable. Doles are necessary only because they provide a convenient starting-point whence to undertake more constructive effort, such as will lead to the ultimate independence of those whom we are striving to assist. Philanthropy is the means by which is secured the restoration of an opportunity to those who have been unfortunate in the strenuous battle of life.

In 1851, the census returns show that the number of blind persons in England and Wales was 18,306, or 1 to every 979 of the population ; in 1861, the number of blind persons had risen to 19,352, or 1 to every 1,037 of the population, and in 1871 to 21,590, or 1 to every 1,052 of the population.

It will be seen, therefore, that even during the periods indicated the percentage of blind

persons to the population was steadily declining.

Increased public attention, concentrated on the problem in the early '70's, had a marked effect on the subsequent census returns, and in the year 1881 we find the number of blind persons 22,832, or 1 to every 1,138 of the population.

It will be necessary to discuss this matter later and to supply additional statistics, but for our present purpose it is sufficient to indicate that not only is there evidence of increased public attention having been given to the problem during this period, but that this attention operated in two distinct ways : it was concerned with the diminution of blindness by the advocacy of preventive and curative methods of treatment, whilst at the same time increased interest was manifested in the social and industrial conditions of the blind as a class.

Not much had yet been accomplished in the direction of providing sound educational facilities for blind children, but we do find from the reports of the Charity Organisation Society and other social agencies and from the occasional Conferences convened by workers on behalf of the blind, that the matter was engaging an ever-widening circle of interested persons, and about the year 1871 we find compulsory education for blind children being advocated. It must be remembered, however, in this connection, that long before the Acts of 1891 and 1893, the voluntary institutions had already warmly espoused the idea of providing elementary education for the blind, and that a vast amount of useful work had been accomplished in this direction.

In some of the old-established schools the curriculum provided was of a very excellent order, and the results that were even then being attained were highly commendable and praiseworthy. Thus there was not only inaugurated a system under private benevolence

which provided Homes or Asylums for a large number of necessitous blind people, but it had already dawned upon the intelligence of these early pioneers that the solution of their difficulties lay in the direction of providing educational and employment facilities.

We are to-day with enlarged opportunities building upon the foundations laid by our forbears. Whatever excellent qualities may be attributed to the present generation of workers on behalf of the blind must, of necessity, be largely credited to those who gave such impetus to the work in days when private benevolence undertook and discharged the whole obligation.

CHAPTER III.

THE EVOLUTION OF PHILANTHROPY
(CONTINUED)

*"What in me is dark,
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That to the height of this great argument
I may assert eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men."*
"PARADISE LOST"

LOOKING far away back through the grey mists of our historical development, it is as certain as anything very well can be that present standards were not attained as a result of any particular upheaval or upheavals. Such steps as were taken have led almost imperceptibly to the present position, and it is equally certain that the future holds in store nothing of permanence that is likely to be attained from any form of panic legislation.

In the days of our adolescence, we fondly dreamed and planned an Eldorado which we believed would surely come within the space of a few short years. But some of us have lived long enough to realise sadly that history is not made in this way, and that the well-being of communities is not constructed upon a mere hypothesis or Utopian ideal conceived in the exuberance of our youthful imagination.

Though it is not intended in these pages to give an historical survey of the processes of evolution by which the present status of the blind can be scientifically accounted for, it is necessary to the proper study

of the economic questions which we are about to discuss that we should know something of those movements that have gone before, in order that we may properly take account of the great factors which have contributed, and are still contributing, to the building up of a system whose foundations were laid before the dawn of our historical genesis.

It is clear then from all the old records that are still extant that not only the blind, but other sections of handicapped people were in the first place protected and cared for by the oldest religious communities of which we have any reliable knowledge. It is equally certain that a common impression lingered in the minds of laymen, probably for centuries, that "the scourge of blindness was visited upon the sons of men because of some heinous act performed either by the stricken individual or his antecedents," and nothing but the ethical conception inculcated by the religious orders of which we have spoken tended to dissipate and obliterate this fallacy. Perhaps we can afford today to smile at the credulity of those who conceived such an idea, but that it existed, and that it was deeply rooted in the traditions of the past, is vouched for on unimpeachable authority.

It is undoubtedly true that for many centuries the religious communities of Europe zealously undertook and performed the obligations "of feeding and clothing the blind and the lame and many of those who suffered from serious mental disorders." The various States had little or no concern for such folk—they were outside the pale of the common law and conceived to be subjects to whom the ordinary standards of conduct could not be applied. Since, therefore, they were not citizens in the accepted sense, and since they could not be made generally to perform the tasks assigned even to those who were held as slaves, the only organised bodies taking cog-

nisance of their existence and attempting to make provision for their needs were the religious orders.

The condition of these unfortunate people was subjected to the violent and spasmodic changes occasioned by the political situations of the times. When a particular ecclesiastical order was in the ascendancy and was wealthy and powerful, the blind and other necessitous folk received a larger measure of consideration and care ; and correspondingly, when the popularity of the order waned, and when monarchs and their retainers appropriated to themselves much of the wealth that had heretofore been vested with the churches, then those who were dependent upon charity experienced harder times and darker days.

This is what happened in every European country, and in tracing systems designed to deal with the blind it is practically certain that their common origin dates from the time when the ethical view of the churches stood much higher than the concept of the various States.

One need not dwell at greater length on this aspect of affairs, nor is it necessary here to attempt to trace step by step the changes and modifications which were made. It is sufficient to note that the conception at length dawned upon the minds of philanthropists that to maintain large bodies of afflicted people in a condition of idleness was not in reality to bestow upon them that true charity and kindness which was said to actuate their motives.

The time came when the ecclesiastical orders were too poor to discharge the obligations which had hitherto devolved upon them, but good men and women, inspired by the beliefs inculcated as a result of Christian teaching, took up the work of caring for those who were physically or mentally incapable of providing for themselves.

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth, under the

Acts dealing with Poor Law, we have the first indications of a recognition by the State of obligations on behalf of the blind, but it was not until long after that period that such recognition actually crystallised into the performance of definite acts of benevolence.

The philanthropist for several centuries bore the burden of responsibility, and it would ill behove us to-day to criticise their conduct in any unfriendly spirit, for whatever goodness may be said to pervade the system of to-day can be largely traced to the self-sacrifice and benevolence displayed by our forbears. The Asylum or Home for the Blind was the product entirely of their creative and constructive energy. It fulfilled a definitely useful purpose in the life of the community; it discharged obligations which were unrecognised by the State or the Municipalities, and, moreover, it paved the way for the gradual and constructive work that has been performed since the middle of the last century.

It was inevitable that the philanthropist should sooner or later recognise that to collect large numbers of blind people, to house and to feed and clothe them, and to require from them no discharge of the duties and responsibilities of citizenship, was not to develop those factors which make for the physical and moral well-being of persons so treated; and by degrees, therefore, it was assumed, and that rightly so, that loss of sight and other disabilities did not preclude the individual from discharging obligations and undertaking duties common to the rest of mankind.

Though the older Institutions for the Blind in this and other countries were in the first place, as we have already indicated, merely Homes or Asylums, it was soon apparent that methods of training and education could be applied to the residents, and that with most valuable results. We find that about the year 1850 some of the Institutions, with the means and apparatus

at their disposal, were imparting methods of education and training that were infinitely superior to those to which the average member of the working classes had access, and much credit is due to the voluntary organisations for the enthusiasm with which they took up the task. Most of the Associations had already recognised that instruction in handicrafts could be given effectively as a means of making the lives of those so instructed more tolerable. For the most part it had not dawned upon them that those under instruction could ever enter into commercial or industrial life with any hope of success. That conception was a development which was to follow speedily, for in the year 1870 it was generally recognised in the English Institutions that there was a sphere of usefulness open to the blind upon which they ought to be equipped to enter.

Slowly, but deliberately and of set purpose, the authorities of the larger Institutions in the country commenced to shape their administrative machinery in such a fashion as to admit of these tasks being undertaken. From the very nature of things it was obvious that progress would be slow, very slow. The Institutions for the most part were extremely poor, and, apart from the enthusiastic support given to them by comparatively few zealous admirers of the work, the help they generally secured was meagre in the extreme. If the strivings and difficulties of those early days could be vividly recounted in these more propitious times, we venture to think that some of us would feel a little less vain concerning our own achievements, and be prepared to bestow a great deal more admiration upon those early pioneers whose devotion and fidelity to the cause have alone made it possible for us to count upon a tangible measure of success. It may be that in some quarters this measure of success will be challenged, or, at the best, grudging-

ingly conceded. It will be seen later, however, whether these contentions are well founded or no.

I submit that the facts to be adduced are incontrovertible and the main conclusions irresistible. It is obvious then that the voluntary system is not a thing of mushroom growth, and that it was not foisted upon the community by a few people anxious to make reputations for themselves. Rather is it a system that has been developed and fostered right along the ages, receiving its greater impetus in the Christian era, and so developing in our time as to constitute an organic movement of primary importance. One may feel that it is nearing its economic limits, but so long as men have power to think and act for themselves, so long will there be a place of honour reserved in the scheme of things for a system of thought and action possessing such enormous potentialities for good.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INCEPTION OF THE INDUSTRIAL ERA.

"We all know how unwilling we are to admit the truth of any disgraceful story about a person whose society we like, and from whom we have received favours ; how long we struggle against evidence, how fondly, when the facts cannot be disputed, we cling to the hope that there may be some explanation or some extenuating circumstance with which we are unacquainted. Just such is the feeling which a man of liberal education naturally feels towards the great minds of former days. The debt which he owes to them is incalculable. They have guided him to truth. They have filled his mind with noble and graceful images. They have stood by him in all vicissitudes, comforters in sorrow, nurses in sickness, companions in solitude. Those friendships are exposed to no dangers from the occurrences by which other attachments are weakened or dissolved."—LORD BACON.

I HAVE already noted in connection with the primary, secondary and technical education of the blind, how the instrument of philanthropy has been utilised for the common good of the blind.

It may be worth while in passing to notice the dates of the founding of some of the principal Institutions in the British Isles, and to observe that these great monuments of usefulness had their beginnings in a very primitive origin, and that their growth has been one of consistent development. Whatever changes may be contemplated in the future, one thing is abundantly clear, that these great organisations cannot be set aside. Absorb them, we may ; enlarge the boundary of their activities, we must ; but destroy them in order to set up some new-fangled schemes evolved through the airy imagination of babbling

dreamers, we cannot. Our experiences would be utterly and completely worthless to us did they not lead us to the contemplation and fashioning of methods of procedure such as are calculated to minimise the mistakes of the past, in order that future generations may profit by the results of our actions. Real progress is made in this way, and all history is the established record to which we can point in confirmation of this contention.

I have frequently heard it stated that everything which makes for goodness and efficiency in the blind community is badly administered, but surely this is not the case? Many things are wrong, and it is our duty and our business to try to set them right, but the preponderating number of things we undertake have in them the essential essence of goodness and bring incalculable happiness to thousands of handicapped people for whom the system exists.

It is so easy to embark upon a process of destructive criticism; it is so difficult to essay the task of building the new Jerusalem where men and women may live under conditions of comfort and concord. The wild men who indulge in these violent denunciations are oftentimes the victims of a system that has not been over-kind to them, and, therefore, in our analysis, we have to be mindful not to give too much weight to the utterances of those who exercise no appreciable influence in the moulding of a reasoned public opinion. One may be critical but kind, and constructive without being abusive.

Some of the principal Institutions established in the United Kingdom since 1791 are as follows :—

- 1791 School for the Indigent Blind, Liverpool.
- 1793 Royal Blind Asylum, Edinburgh.
- 1793 Royal Blind Asylum, Bristol.
- 1799 School for the Indigent Blind, Southwark (Leatherhead);
- 1805 Norwich Asylum and School.

- 1810 Richmond Asylum, Dublin.
- 1812 Aberdeen Asylum.
- 1815 Molyneaux Asylum, Dublin.
- 1827 Glasgow Asylum.
- 1831 Workshops for the Blind, Belfast.
- 1833 Wilberforce School, York.
- 1834 Limerick Asylum.
- 1838 London Society for Teaching the Blind to Read, Swiss Cottage.
- 1838 Royal Victoria School for the Blind, Newcastle.
- 1838 West of England Institute for the Blind, Exeter.
- 1839 Henshaw's Institution for the Blind, Manchester.
- 1840 County and City of Cork Asylum.
- 1841 Catholic Asylum, Liverpool.
- 1842 Brighton Asylum.
- 1843 The Royal Midland Institution, Nottingham.
- 1846 The Royal Institution for the Blind, Birmingham.
- 1854 Macan Asylum, Armagh.
- 1856 Association for Promoting the General Welfare of the **Blind, London.**
- 1857 London Association for the Blind.
- 1858 Workshops for the Blind, Cheltenham.
- 1858 Leicester Institution for the Blind.
- 1858 St. Joseph's Asylum, Dublin.
- 1858 St. Mary's Asylum, Dublin.
- 1860 Sheffield Institution for the Blind.
- 1860 Plymouth Institution for the Blind.
- 1861 The Royal Institution for the Blind, Bradford.
- 1861 The Liverpool Workshops for the Blind.
- 1864 Hull and East Riding Institute for the Blind.
- 1864 School for the Blind, Southsea.
- 1865 Swansea Institution for the Blind.
- 1865 Workshops for the Blind, Cardiff.
- 1866 Workshops for the Blind, Leeds.
- 1867 Workshops for the Blind, Bolton.
- 1867 Stockport Institution for the Blind.
- 1867 School for the Blind, Preston.
- 1868 The British and Foreign Blind Association (now the National Institute for the Blind).
- 1870 Newcastle Workshops for the Blind.
- 1872 Workshops for the Blind, Carlisle.
- 1872 The Royal Normal College for the Blind, Upper Norwood.
- 1873 North Shields Workshops for the Blind.

- 1877 Workshops for the Blind of Kent.
- 1877 Greenwich Workshops for the Blind.
- 1877 Sunderland Workshops for the Blind.
- 1879 Blind Employment Factory, Waterloo Road.
- 1880 The West London Workshops for the Blind.
- 1881 Henshaw's Workshops for the Blind.
- 1882 Workshops for the Blind, Wolverhampton.
- 1883 Workshops for the Blind, Oldham.
- 1896 Workshops for the Blind, Whitby.
- 1897 Middlesborough Institution for the Blind.
- 1897 Workshops for the Blind, Tunbridge Wells.
- 1898 Workshops for the Blind, Northampton.
- 1901 Wakefield Workshops for the Blind.
- 1901 Workshops for the Blind, Hanley.
- 1903 Workshops for the Blind, Walsall.
- 1905 Barclay Workshop for Blind Women, London.
- 1907 Accrington Workshops.
- 1908 Blackburn Workshops.
- 1911 Henshaw's Workshops for the Blind, Manchester (extensions).
- 1912 School for Blind Children, Gorleston-on-Sea.
- 1913 Chester Workshops for the Blind.
- 1913 Newport Workshops for the Blind.
- 1914 Stourbridge Workshops for the Blind.
- 1917 Wigan Workshops for the Blind.
- 1918 Dewsbury Workshops for the Blind.
- 1921 Workshops for the Blind, Hartlepool.
- 1921 Halifax Institution for the Blind.
- 1921 Darlington Workshops for the Blind.

Though the possibilities of imparting industrial training were known and recognised in certain specific cases, yet, as I have already indicated, no general recognition of the principle could be said to obtain prior to 1870, and the first serious discussion of this problem is disclosed in the records of a Conference held in 1872.

By the year 1883, however, the authorities of most of the organisations had come to the view that a distinct obligation devolved upon them for providing trade training to those workers who were desirous of obtaining such instruction. Some of the recognised handicrafts already practised in the Institutions, but

heretofore not taught as wage-earning crafts, were obviously capable of being exploited for such purposes, and already a useful beginning had been made in the direction indicated in most of the great centres of industry.

As illustrative of the conditions prevailing, we find in Birmingham, for example, that from Lady-day, 1872, to Lady-day, 1873, the wages paid to 10 journeymen and three women amounted to £304 10s. 7d. The sales were £1,953 9s. 1d. The same Institution from Lady-day, 1882, to Lady-day, 1883, paid in wages to blind workmen £448 15s. 7d., and the sales were £1,948 7s. 9d. In the years 1893-1894, the wages paid to the blind had risen to £789 2s. 1d., and the sales to £2,408 16s. 10d., apart from the disposal of goods other than those manufactured by the blind. In 1903-1904 the wages paid to blind workmen were £2,245 1s. 2d., and the sales amounted to £8,335 5s. 9d. In 1916, the wages paid to blind workers were £4,467, and by sales of goods and materials £24,005. For the year ending March 31st, 1922 (a period of serious depression), the wages and augmentation paid to the blind amounted to £15,101, and the sales were £32,995. During the last-named period the number of blind persons employed had risen to 187. It will be observed that from 1872 to 1883 the progress made was comparatively slight. This bears out in a conclusive fashion the contentions which I have previously urged, and may be taken as indicative of what happened right throughout the country.

The Birmingham Institution typifies in a remarkable way the general rate of progress maintained by the large Institutions throughout the country. It will be necessary to illustrate this point further at a later stage by giving other examples, but for the present I must be content to observe the close attention which

was being given to industrial matters about the year 1883, and the attempt which even then was being made to define the function of the employment agency and to differentiate as between money earned in the form of real wages and supplementary additions given in the form of charity.

In the year 1883 at a Conference of Workers on behalf of the Blind held in the Manor House, York, a paper was read by the late Mr. W. Martin, from which I take the following observations :—

“In connection with the payment of wages to the blind, here also I desiderate a clear line betwixt trade and charity. It is no hardship for me to let a blind man know exactly the monetary value of his labours. It were wrong for me to do otherwise ; my whole arrangements would be thrown out of joint. Not otherwise can I ascertain the proper cost price of an article in order to enable me to dispose of it satisfactorily, nor can I properly ascertain what my blind workman can earn, and to what extent he desires to have his wages augmented. I have no right to debit trade with charity, and I have no right to credit the blind worker with more than he can earn by placing a fictitious value upon his work, even if I can get a fictitious price by using the argument that it is a charitable institution.”

Here we have stated, in a very concise manner, the view-point of at least one of the keenest business men who was at that time entrusted with the management of one of the largest workshops for the blind in the country. It is no business of mine in this work to enter into the highly controversial history of later days in which Mr. Martin was involved, the extract being merely quoted as evidencing the fact that a clear perception was dawning on the minds of the management of Institutions regarding the necessity for dissociating trade relationships from charitable activities.

At the time of which I am writing, the Scottish Institutions were the only organisations which were attempting, in any real sense, to supplement the earnings of the workers by charitable gifts ; hence it became clear to the management of these organisations that the selling price of an article must not be dearer to the purchasing public than the self-same article could be obtained from an ordinary emporium. At that time no real estimate had been made of the earning capacity of the blind worker ; indeed, it was much too early to attempt seriously to assess that value. This was only done, or attempted to be done, at a later stage in our industrial development, when circumstances and experience had made it incumbent upon responsible people to determine, in some degree at least, upon what basis a reasonable augmentation of wages must be provided. It took long years to convince those associated with the sale of commodities manufactured by the blind that they could not use the charitable appeal to influence their business relationships with the public, but I think at length a different conception has been reached, and that those charged with the responsibility of selling goods made by the blind now realise that not only must they give to the public commodities of a quality equal to those produced by sighted labour, but that the selling price must compare not less favourably. In other words, our business relationships with the public must be those of the ordinary trader, otherwise we cannot hope to survive. The exigencies of competition make it intensely difficult to subscribe to present-day commercial standards, but it is now well understood that unless institutional authorities are prepared to make strenuous efforts in this direction, the work of the blind will become an ignored quantity in commerce, and the expense of employing blind workers will be

much too costly to make it worth the while of the agencies to cultivate and develop.

These and other dangers immediately confronting us will be dealt with at length in subsequent chapters. At present I am endeavouring to review the progress made through the inception of modern industrialism so far as it affects the blind community, and to demonstrate that progress is being made along right lines, although perhaps it is not being accelerated quite so rapidly as some people desire.

CHAPTER V.

THE INCEPTION OF THE INDUSTRIAL ERA
(CONTINUED)

*I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.*

BLAKE.

READERS will have already gathered from previous references made in these pages that so recently as the year 1883 many glaring misconceptions regarding the functions of Institutions for the Blind existed, even in the minds of those prominently associated with the work.

In a paper given by the late Dr. T. R. Armitage at a conference held in York in July, 1883, this authority said :—

“Some time ago I was dining with the leading member of the Committee of one of our Blind Schools, and in reply to my question he said, ‘Most of our pupils, when they leave us, are supported at home by their friends, or, what I think is far better, go to the work-house ; they have had four or five happy, bright years at school, which they will always look back to with pleasure, so that the education they have received has not been thrown away.’ ” It is only just to add, however, that even then such a conception was fast disappearing from the minds of responsible people, but the illustration serves to indicate a point of view which was at one time generally accepted.

In the paper to which reference has already been made, the author of that most interesting and instructive book, "The Education and Employment of the Blind," forcefully suggested how necessary it was that a new ideal should be planted in the minds of educators of the blind. It was not sufficient merely to provide the facilities for training, but in every great centre of industry well-equipped workshops should be called into existence and methods of after-care introduced in order that the training given might be turned to useful account.

So far back as 1867 we find that in Germany these views were entertained in-so-far-as "After-Care" work was concerned; the principal Institutions had well-organised systems under which they cared for their ex-pupils. In this country we more slowly assumed responsibility for the task, but, in the main, it may be said without disparagement that we have travelled far beyond the achievements of our continental neighbours.

What is known as the "Saxony System" was in operation at the period I have already mentioned, not only in Dresden and the State of Saxony generally, but in Mecklenburg, Holstein, the Rhine Province, and so far afield as the Jewish School in Vienna.

At this period it is difficult to find any reliable data with regard to wage conditions, but it is certain that the remuneration was very low and quite inadequate for the proper maintenance of the worker, even taking into consideration the fact that the cost of living was much lower than Europe is experiencing to-day. It is tolerably certain that the standards obtaining among blind workers were not at all comparable with present conditions. Industry was only slowly developing as a regular means of employing sightless people; workshop methods were crude, and the plant with which they were equipped had not been

modified and re-shaped as a result of the experiences of later years.

At the time of the Royal Commission on the Blind, 1886-1889, there were in the United Kingdom nine schools for resident pupils and twenty-six institutions, being combinations of workshops and schools, educating 1,618 blind pupils, while the School Boards of Bradford, Cardiff, Glasgow, London and Sunderland were also providing education for 194, making a total of 1,812 under instruction. The Census Returns for 1881 show that there were in the United Kingdom 2,630 blind children between the ages of five and fifteen, viz., in Scotland 210, in England and Wales 1,710 and in Ireland 710. It would appear, therefore, that steadily public opinion was being developed along right lines, and, as I have previously indicated, the foundations for present attainments were being laid at this period. The Census Returns for 1881 show that there were 23,467 blind persons in England and Wales.

As previously indicated, the Scottish Institutions, with one exception, were the only organisations attempting to provide funds with which to augment wages. A perusal of the evidence given before the Royal Commission discloses the fact that there was in some quarters a positive and determined opposition to such a policy on the part of certain managers of Institutions for the Blind in England. The superintendent of one large establishment felt that it was immoral to give the worker money which he did not actually earn, that it would lead to pauperisation and a general demoralisation, against which he thought Institutions should contend.

The view-point thus expressed represented the opinions of other managers, though it would be unjust to place them all in this category. Still, it is certain that some of the older Institutions with considerable means at their disposal might have done

more to provide material assistance for the workers had those responsible for the management of these establishments been imbued with a progressive outlook. Despite this opposition, however, some of the best minds in the blind world, by their conduct and influence, were moulding a healthy public opinion which was soon to find expression in legislative enactment.

I have no desire to burden the reader with complicated tables of figures ; this narrative is intended to be a simple explanation of the trend of historical events, illustrated by piquant instances indicative of the rate of progress at which the growth and development of philanthropic agencies proceeded.

We have already seen in the case of the Birmingham Institution how that from very small beginnings a great Institution has arisen, which is to-day a monument of usefulness. Many other similar developments could easily be traced. The Cardiff Institution, for example, commenced its operations in an exceedingly modest fashion. Founded in 1865 in a small private house with three or four pupils, the organisation passed through many vicissitudes, and seven years later the number of persons undergoing training had increased to nine. In 1876, twenty-one men and boys were employed. By the year 1910 the number of employees had risen to fifty-five and the sales had reached a gratifying total. I find that for the year ending March 31st, 1922, the number of workers had increased to 84, and the total amount of wages and supplementary grants to £6,217 12s. 2d. ; the sales during the year amounted to £7,462 15s. 2d. But this period was one of serious depression in South Wales, and left the Institution with very large stocks which I am happy to say have since been advantageously disposed of.

The rate of progress here indicated has been well

maintained in most of the large industrial centres of the country. There have, of course, been some areas where a growth in prosperity has been almost phenomenal, but these are quite isolated instances.

The evolution of our industrial system has, of course, been subject to the general standard of prosperity obtaining in the country. When periods of depression have been experienced, the Institutions have naturally and necessarily had to share the bad times. Any boom in trade, however, has relatively affected these organisations, being reflected both in sales and increased wages.

It is not to be expected, however, that the mere trade turnover of the workshops can be sufficient in volume to secure a profit large enough to enable the management appreciably to augment wages from such sources. Therefore, there must always be a large reserve of public and private benevolence which can be utilised for the assistance of the workers in the direction of a sensible and judicious method of augmenting wages. These considerations, however, will be dealt with at length later.

The next chapter will survey in detail the recommendations of the Royal Commission of 1886 to 1889 and the developments following that enquiry.

CHAPTER VI.

THE REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION,
1886-1889.

“Do not hope to gain the victory in a day. It may take months, it may take years. Inch by inch, and step by step, the battle must be fought. Over and over again you will be worsted and give ground, but do not therefore yield. Resolve never to be driven back quite so far as you have advanced.”—WHYTE MELVILLE.

WE have already gathered from references made to the Royal Commission on the Blind and Deaf, 1886-1889, that the recommendations, although far-reaching, by no means met the requirements of the situation. For example, I find that one of the conclusions reached was to the effect that, given greater development and expansion, the voluntary system might be held to meet all the urgent necessities and to dispose of the idea of State intervention. This view was expressed twenty years later by Mr. Herbert Gladstone, now Lord Gladstone, when he was Secretary for Home Affairs in 1906. But as Lord Bacon puts it: “Time glides on; fortune is inconstant; tempers are soured; bonds which seem insoluble are daily sundered by interest, by emulation, or by caprice.” To-day, even the most ardent individualist is not so foolish as to wish to repudiate the measure of State responsibility for the blind which has so far found acceptance.

In a survey of the subject it is necessary that I should recall the recommendations and conclusions

framed by the Royal Commission, to which reference has already been made, in order that we may thereby gauge the progress already attained, and be stimulated and encouraged to formulate a programme for the future. This programme, if not accomplished in our time, will at least find its full fruition in the generations that are yet unborn. That duty we owe to those who have striven for progress in the past no less than we owe it to ourselves. The struggle for better conditions is not over ; indeed, it is only just finding legitimate expression. I cannot do better than quote *in extenso* the Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations from an important Government document :—

“The chief recommendations of the Royal Commission may be summarised as follows :—

(a) The provisions of the Education Acts should be extended to the blind, and compulsory attendance enforced from 5 to 16.

From 16 to 21 the school authority should have the power and the duty to assist all necessitous blind persons to maintain themselves while learning a trade. Those who become blind from 21 to 50 should equally receive help from the school authority, or if they have passed through an institution should be assisted on the ‘Saxon system.’

The State might fairly be called upon to assist a secondary school.

The Royal Commission considered that, if the Education Acts were applied as suggested and State funds therefore became available, this would release from educational purposes charitable funds which might be applied to the enlargement of workshops or assistance of old pupils.

(b) A central workshop should be established in every large centre where the same has

not been started. But the State should not directly subsidise their work.

There should be greater solidarity among the institutions, so that they would work harmoniously together.

(c) The 'Saxon system' should be adopted as far as possible by all institutions—without any State aid.

(i) A register should be kept of all pupils leaving the institution.

(ii) They should be assisted with tools and materials.

(iii) The institution should endeavour to provide funds to supplement wages.

(iv) An endeavour should be made to interest some influential local agency with which the institution could correspond.

(d) In the case of pensions, hard and fast conditions might be so relaxed that all meritorious cases should be reached. There should be co-operation amongst all pension societies. The State should provide liberally for the aged blind.

(e) As regards the Poor Law, there should be liberal out-relief. The blind should not be forced to go into the workhouse.

(f) For the purpose of the Census there should be a uniform schedule of inquiry for the blind throughout the United Kingdom, including causes and extent of blindness. Every school or institution should keep a record for this purpose.

(g) Information respecting the treatment of purulent ophthalmia should be circulated

through the sanitary authority or through the Post Office.

(*b*) In the case of Ireland, every facility should be given for sending children to some properly certified institution.

(*i*) A grant should be given from the Exchequer of three-fourths of the sum necessary for education and maintenance, and one-fourth should be provided from the local or union rate.

(*ii*) There should be Government inspection.

(*iii*) The education should be denominational.

It was reported that the aged and infirm in many workhouses have a wretched existence."

It will be seen from the foregoing paragraphs that there was much in the recommendations which was vague and uncertain in character. The hesitation to admit fundamental responsibility by the State was characteristic of the times, and the difficulties associated with collecting funds from voluntary sources had apparently received but scanty consideration ; otherwise so rigid a dependence upon such an unreliable and fluctuating quantity could not have won the confidence which it evidently enjoyed.

In summarising the results secured up to 1917, the same document says :—

"The State by legislative and administrative action has given effect to the recommendations to the following extent :—

(*a*) Provision has been made for the elementary education of the blind in England and Wales by the Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act, 1893, and in Scotland by the Education of the Blind and

Deaf Mute (Scotland) Act, 1890. No similar provision has been made for the compulsory education of blind children in Ireland.

For secondary and technical training of blind persons over 16, local education authorities in England and Wales have permissive powers under Part II of the Education Act, 1902. The Board of Education have power to aid technical schools and classes and secondary schools. Analogous provision has been made for Scotland under the Education (Scotland) Act, 1908.

(b) The system of old age pensions has benefited a number of blind persons over 70 years of age.

(c) Ophthalmia Neonatorum has been made compulsorily notifiable in England and Wales.

(d) A system of maternity and child welfare grants has been established.

Apart from the action of the State, provision for the blind by voluntary organisations has been considerably developed in recent years."

Keeping in mind statistics previously given, it is noteworthy that in 1915 there were 56 workshops for the blind, many of which make provision for the industrial training of pupils over 16; 23 homes for the blind; 71 pension societies; 62 home teaching societies; a considerable number of libraries and miscellaneous societies, and 7 unions in England and Wales and 10 missions in Scotland for the general care of the blind.

It would appear also that, taking into consideration most of the large institutions and associations for the blind throughout the country, the annual income from subscriptions and donations amounted to about £100,000, to which must be added a like amount

derived from investments and stocks. No claim is made that these figures accurately reflect the total income; the amounts are merely approximate, and are set forth in the Government Report as being figures ascertained at the time the document was prepared.

There can be no denying the fact that the impetus given to voluntary effort since 1914 has been considerable. This is all the more gratifying when we remember that about this time the Government began to take a definite interest in the matter; for it must be remembered that the Interdepartmental Committee was appointed in 1914, and as a result of the recommendations and conclusions formulated by that Committee we have had recent legislation.

I intend in the next chapter to take a few principal institutions and to show by statistical evidence that their power for good has increased enormously during the past fifteen years. Having given these examples as testimony to the contention that real and substantial progress has been made, I propose to direct the attention of the reader to the economic aspect of present-day problems and attempt to forecast the imminent developments of the future.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PROGRESS OF VOLUNTARYISM.

*“ With aching hands and bleeding feet
We dig and heap, lay stone on stone ;
We bear the burden and the heat
Of the long day, and wish ’twere done.
Not till the hours of light return
All we have built do we discern.”*

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

I HAVE upon many occasions endeavoured to indicate by piquant illustrations the growth and development of the philanthropic movement. The task was undertaken with the crudest implements, but it has grown to enormous proportions, and is reaching such a point of vantage that sooner or later that which was essentially a private responsibility will ultimately evolve an irresistible and transcendent corporate obligation.

The ethical standard inculcated by great philanthropists had directed State activities into more humane channels than those along which governments of the past had been disposed to travel, and for this inestimable legacy statesmen and politicians are responsible only in a very minor degree.

By self-sacrifice and devotion to ideals our ancestors have bequeathed to us a task, in the main, less difficult than that by which they were confronted, and resuming the obligations of those who preceded us is not nearly so arduous an undertaking because of the initiative and the zeal by which they were impelled.

Ruskin pertinently reminds us that "men have certain work to do for their bread, and that is to be done strenuously ; other work for their delight, and that is to be done heartily ; neither is to be done by halves or shifts, but with a will, and what is not worth that effort is not to be done at all."

Those who care to look closely into the history of philanthropy will find that the work was undertaken with zest, and that it brought no mean measure of delight to those who essayed the task.

To-day, though we are confronted with innumerable difficulties, yet after all there is some consolation to be gained from the knowledge that real and substantial progress is being achieved. To the men and women of our own time who are able to look back to the beginning of the century with a view to forming an estimate of conditions then prevailing, and comparing the circumstances then obtaining with present-day standards, there must be an element of considerable satisfaction to be derived from the knowledge gained and the personal triumphs which have resulted from their fidelity to a just and noble cause.

I have already undertaken to further substantiate the claim that the evolution of voluntarism is bringing in its wake a steady and reliable increase, not merely in the number of sightless people employed, but also in an improved standard of life for all sections of the blind community ; for it is unquestionably true that every increase in the number of people usefully engaged represents a release of charitable funds which are being utilised for the benefit of those who may be physically or mentally incapable of contributing their quota to the world's work. Thus I find the costs of administration are steadily declining, and that a corresponding increase of available help is being given to those for whom benevolence is legitimately intended.

May I quote figures in connection with one of the best known and longest established institutions in this country, namely that situate in the City of Bristol, in proof of what I have stated above?

During the past twenty years, owing to an enlightened administration, the work in this centre performed on behalf of the blind has undergone such radical changes as to place Bristol in the front rank of benevolent agencies acting on behalf of the blind. Its administration is able and efficient, and its organisation generally is of such a comprehensive character as to render it capable of compassing in a remarkable degree every phase of the problem which demands scientific treatment.

I am indebted to Mr. C. W. Stevens, the Manager of the Workshops for the Blind, Museum Avenue, Bristol, for the information given in the table on p. 42, and I may add that during the years in which this undertaking has been entirely under his able management, there has been displayed a progressive spirit and a desire to render service such as was seldom revealed in other days.

The following figures are also interesting because they show the comprehensive nature of the work undertaken by the Bristol organisation, and evidence the fact that the authorities of the institution are paying close attention to the needs, not only of the people who are employed in the workshops, but also to the requirements of the scattered blind in the area covered by the operations of the Society.

Pupils at present resident in the School ..	128
Workers and Adult pupils in Workshops	86
Home Workers under the Supervisor ..	51
Women resident in Hostel	22
Visited by five Home Teachers in Bristol and district in addition to those in- cluded above	340

	1902	1911	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922-3 (15 months)
Wages earned	£ 753	£ 910	£ 1270	£ 1419	£ 1621	£ 1768	£ 1916	£ 2581	£ 2298	£ 2507
War Bonus	—	—	—	—	271	400	459			
Augmentation of Wages and Gratuities	—	417	646	747	640	762	1619	3928	4595	5931
Help Fund Gifts	—	—	564	654	647	655	633			
Allowances from Guardians and Friends	—	424	638	632	627	777	864	541	565	1130
Kempe's Trust Fund Gifts ...	31	31	26	31	34	—	—	—	—	—
Pensions	—	210	228	240	246	246	252	260	250	244
Home Teachers' Wages ...	148	164	167	164	167	204	253	428	461	680
Collectors' Wages	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	129	324	409
Number of blind workers employed	48	76	86	84	83	83	84	88	90	90
Sales	£1826	£3403	£4264	£5148	£6146	£9481	£10138	£11022	£8296	£8602

It will at once be obvious to those who have perused the foregoing paragraphs that here is another concrete example of useful and progressive work, all tending in a very definite fashion to make a much larger percentage of the blind community sensibly contribute to their own needs by the performance of useful labour.

It is not my business here to examine the apparent disparity between wages earned and augmentation allowances, the really important point being that in consequence of the activities of this well-equipped organisation, a much greater measure of comfort is being bestowed upon the blind of Bristol and district than was the case a few short years ago. The management of the Bristol Blind Asylum is to be heartily congratulated upon the results they have achieved, and I wish them "God speed" with their magnificent work.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PROGRESS OF VOLUNTARYISM
(CONTINUED)

“ All the grand agencies which the progress of mankind evolve are the aggregate result of countless single wills, each of which, thinking merely of its own end, and perhaps fully gaining it, is at the same time enlisted by Providence in the secret service of the world.”—JAMES MARTINEAU.

FROM the evidence so far adduced it is clear that voluntaryism, in so far as it affects the interests of the blind community, is not the “accursed thing” which some pamphleteers would have you believe. Whatever may have been its limitations and shortcomings in the past, the results of present-day activities are such as to command admiration and respect—nay, more than that, I am impelled to say quite unreservedly that under any well-directed scheme of State organisation, the interests which spring from an innate and spontaneous desire on the part of individuals to render service, whether it be expressed in monetary assistance or other personal endeavour, will, of necessity, be welcomed and appreciated.

This view is uttered with a full knowledge of all that the writer has thought and stated in the past, for it is not until one realises all that is involved in far-reaching administrative work that one is led to understand the vast complexities of this and kindred social problems.

It is inconceivable that the most highly organised system of help that can be provided by the State can safely eliminate these considerations, but even if that

were possible it would be a thing not to be desired. Legislation is set up to deal with the claims of vast masses of the people. In a general way it cannot provide for individual needs, and exercise that sense of discrimination which gives to voluntarism the deep-rooted personal concern for this man's well-being or that woman's interests.

Such legislation may prevent that awful degradation and privation which so frequently handicaps large sections of the population, and to the extent that it accomplishes so much it is a consummation to be desired ; but you cannot deal with vast aggregations of human beings satisfactorily by striving to eliminate all personal responsibility and seeking to discard those elemental humanitarian impulses which cause some men to be charitable to those who may seem to be unfortunate in the battle of life.

It will be obvious then from what I have already stated that my motive in bringing forward evidence of the progressive development of the voluntary system is not designed to minimise the importance of the action of the State or of corporate bodies on behalf of the blind, but simply to remind my readers that real and substantial results are accruing from present-day methods, and that thereby the foundations for still greater achievements are being carefully, and, I may say, even scientifically, prepared.

The difficulty is not in finding data with which to establish this contention, but rather in selecting from a vast mass of material just a few of the best examples with which I may most conclusively drive home my general contentions.

So far it will be agreed, I think, that the evidence provided has been conclusive, but by way of further illustration may I be permitted to cite yet another forceful example of the growth and permanent value

of an old and well-tried Institution—that of the Royal Midland Institution for the Blind, Nottingham.

Below I give a table showing the number of persons employed, the amount of wages earned and the sales from 1913 to 1923 inclusive. It will be observed that no augmentation grants are here included, the figures as they concern the employees being actually trade earnings, or, in other words, the labour value of the workers so engaged.

In 1913 the average wage, without augmentation, was a little more than 17/- per week. In 1923, it had slightly risen, but in the meantime the number of employed persons had increased by nearly 75 per cent. It should be added that in the interim a recognition of the fact that trade earnings were insufficient for the proper maintenance of the workers had caused the committee of the Institution not only to adopt the original Government scale of augmentation, but also to pay an additional $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on earnings, which, taken on averages, gives to the worker an amount, inclusive of trade earnings and augmentation, of something like 30/- per week.

No one pretends that these are ideal conditions. I think the management of the Institution in question would be among the first to admit this; but comparing old conceptions with new conditions, the point I have to urge is that substantial progress is being made.

Look at the table carefully for yourselves, and I think you will agree that my contention is established beyond all dispute.

<i>Year.</i>	<i>No. of Workers.</i>	<i>Wages.</i>	<i>Sales.</i>
1913	38	£1,714	£8,103
1914	43	£1,758	£8,672
1915	42	£1,833	£8,713

<i>Year.</i>	<i>No. of Workers.</i>	<i>Wages.</i>	<i>Sales.</i>
1916	45	£2,173	£10,324
1917	42	£2,447	£11,420
1918	45	£2,044	£14,056
1919	50	£2,408	£20,050
1920	53	£2,388	£24,733
1921	50	£3,225	£24,884
1922	58	£2,580	£20,025
1923	65	£2,946	£20,255

I have not attempted to indicate how in many other ways the blind, under the care of the Nottingham Institution, are receiving the benefits conferred by the organisation—under Home Workers' Schemes and in divers other ways. This, too, is an enlarged sphere of work of comparatively recent growth, and is a further testimony to the value and usefulness of the organisation. No further commendation is necessary from me in the light of the facts submitted.

In the next chapter I propose to deal at some length with industrial developments as they particularly affect the employment of blind women. I hope to be able to show that in this difficult sphere of work substantial results are accruing, and that there is good reason to hope that wage conditions are steadily improving, whilst an ever-increasing number of women are being usefully employed.

CHAPTER IX.

EMPLOYMENT OF BLIND WOMEN.

“ If men from their youth were weaned from that sauntering humour, wherein some, out of custom, let a good part of their life run uselessly away, without either business or recreation, they would find time enough to acquire dexterity and skill in hundreds of things, which, though remote from their proper callings, would not at all interfere with them. And therefore, I think, for this, as well as for other reasons, a lazy, listless humour, which idly dreams away the days, is of all others the least to be indulged or permitted in young people ; it is the proper state of one sick or out of order in his health, and is tolerable in nobody of what age or condition soever.—LOCKE.

THE immediate task before me in this chapter is to give a brief account of the activities undertaken by voluntary institutions in the all-important sphere of endeavouring to provide suitable, congenial and remunerative employment for blind women.

Those who have, in a special degree, tackled this aspect of the problem, have performed an inestimable service to humanity in general and to the blind community in particular.

There are no emoluments likely to accrue from the performance of this task ; the work is difficult and the fruits of such toil can only be gathered as a result of an infinitude of painstaking effort and diligent application. Indeed, I have long since arrived at the conclusion that the useful and necessary work of the world, the devotion and sacrifice which good men and women are ever prone to make for others, could

never be undertaken were their motives to be actuated merely by a love of gain or a desire for popularity. These essential services are most frequently performed by people whose names are unknown and whose good deeds are never emblazoned upon the pages of history.

We have seen how from very small and apparently insignificant actions a great and potentious philanthropic system has been evolved. It has moved from primitive conceptions to gigantic achievements, and, in consequence of its great dynamic powers, it has bestowed untold blessings upon humanity which cannot be measured in terms of cash payments.

The process would seem to be slow, but just as a great edifice cannot be conceived and constructed in a day, so, in like manner, great world-wide systems can only reflect the experiences and the ideas for which they stand when they have safely passed through the testing time.

In like manner it would appear to be equally true that such systems cannot be overthrown without involving tremendous human disaster, the enormity of which cannot be contemplated by men who value the progress of the race. The drastic changes made by great upheavals and revolutions have their aftermath and are tempered ultimately by the same processes of evolution so frequently discarded when the blood is hot and the fevered passion for change has taken possession of the body-politic.

Someone has aptly said : " An element of weakness in much of our resolving is that we try to grasp too much of life at one time. We think of it as a whole, instead of taking the days one by one. Life is a mosaic, and each tiny piece must be cut and set with skill." So it is with the little world in which " we live and move and have our being." Each man makes his contribution, be it ever so tiny, to the solution of the

problem nearest his heart, and thus we arrive at a condition where life becomes tolerable, yes, even enjoyable, to those for whom the effort has been undertaken. There is no more forceful example of such a conception than in the progressive development and industrial evolution of the blind worker.

I have been endeavouring to secure information for the guidance of my friends in connection with the employment of blind women, and thanks to the many good people who have responded to my invitation a mass of useful information has been accumulated. It will not be possible to convey all the facts in a short chapter, but sufficient detail can be given to show that during the past few years this difficult phase of the employment problem has received sympathetic treatment.

At the Association for Promoting the General Welfare of the Blind, Tottenham Court Road, London, W., in 1914 there were 33 women workers, and the rate of payment was very low compared with the standard prevailing to-day. In 1924 the number of employees is 46, and the following results are given in the various departments :—Average weekly wage, inclusive of supplement: Brush Drawers, 29/-; Bedding Makers, 38/6; Machinists, 45/7; Chair Caners, 25/4; Typists, 38/6. I think it will be generally conceded that the results are very creditable to the management.

In 1912 the London Association for the Blind employed 2 women on round machine knitting. In 1924 the number employed was 63, and in addition there were 18 pupils in the knitting department, 7 basket makers and 14 pupils, 2 weavers, 1 telephone operator and 2 typists—making in all 75 in addition to the apprentices. In respect of wages, 9 knitters earned over £2 per week, 20 between 30/- and 40/-, 10 between 25/- and 30/-, 15 between 20/- and 25/-,

and 6 under 20/-; the weavers were paid on a set wage of 30/- per week. The telephone operator and typists received a sum of £2 per week. At present there are 107 workers and apprentices, whereas in 1912 there were only 2.

In 1912 the Barclay Workshop for Blind Women employed 19 women; the average wage was about 7/- per week, plus 4/- augmentation grant. To-day it is a matter for much congratulation that the organisation is able to employ 51 blind women at an average wage of £1 2s. 9d., plus 7/- augmentation grant.

In Birmingham we are told that in 1912, 30 blind women were employed in the local workshops. To-day the number is 66. The average wage now received, inclusive of augmentation, amounts to 27/- per week. In 1912 it was 10/10.

The Blind Employment Factory, Waterloo Road, London, S.E., has not undertaken to employ large numbers of women. At present there are 5 so engaged, and the average wage, inclusive of supplement, is 25/-.

At the Bradford Institution the number of blind women does not appear to have appreciably increased of late years, although at present there are a considerable number of apprentices. The average wage for the 29 women employed is £1 3s. 2d. per week, inclusive of supplement.

At Dundee, 21 women are now employed at a minimum wage of 25/- per week. It must be understood, however, that such minimum is only paid in the ordinary way to those women who have completed a proper period of apprenticeship.

In 1912 there were 38 women employed at the Royal Glasgow Asylum for the Blind. The average wage was 10/6 per week. Now there are 71 employed, the weekly wage being 31/6.

Even in a small town such as Northampton em-

ployment is provided for seven blind women, and the average wage last year, inclusive of supplement, amounted to 27/6 per week.

It is interesting to observe that at the Workshops for the Blind, Cornwallis Street, Liverpool, there are 32 blind women employed, and the average weekly wage, inclusive of supplement, is 30/-. I am informed that the wages have more than quadrupled since 1912. From this fact it will be apparent that the conception of a standard of life, even so recently as twelve years ago, is amply reflected in the conditions now prevailing.

Some interesting information is to hand regarding the progress of women's employment at the Workshops for the Blind, Leeds. In 1912 there were 12 women employed, and the wages were, to my personal knowledge, exceedingly small, probably not more than an average of 14/- per week. In 1924 there were 24 women employed, and the average wage is 36/6 per week. In addition there are 12 home workers whose average is 15/- per week. The superintendent makes the following interesting observations : " We attribute the increase in the number of workshop employees to the development of the industries carried on—mainly chair seating, knitting and brush making. These results have been obtained, to a large extent, through successful advertising and the superior quality of the articles made, thus creating a greater demand for the goods."

At Henshaw's Institution for the Blind, Manchester, there were only 8 women employed in 1912 ; the wages paid at that period ranged from 5/- to 8/- per week, to which was added a subsidy of 25 per cent. and a further 4/- per week. Thus, at the highest computation, they could not have received more than a maximum of 14/- per week. In 1924 there were 27 women employed, and their average wage would appear to be in the region of 30/- per week.

The Blind Women's Industries, Werneth Hall, Oldham, is another magnificent example of what can be achieved as a result of private benevolence. In 1907 the wages and bonuses paid to a small number of blind women amounted to £69. In 1923 the wages bill had risen to £398. I am afraid, however, that in this instance wages do not, by any means, represent the volume of assistance that these women workers have received at the hands of a generous benefactress by whom the effort was launched.

At the Newcastle Workshops for the Adult Blind there were 8 women employed in addition to 5 outdoor workers, the minimum wage, inclusive of supplement, being 25/- per week.

In 1917, 4 blind women were employed at the Sunderland Workshops for the Blind. Their average wage was about 10/6 per week. In 1924 there were 12 women so employed, and the average weekly wage was £1 7s. 6d.

Possibly a sufficiently large number of examples has been given to prove that progress is proceeding satisfactorily in this sphere of employment. I would add, however, that in several institutions the growth of women's work is of comparatively recent development, and it is difficult, under the circumstances, to give details. For example, the London Association for Teaching and Training the Blind, Swiss Cottage, N.W., has recently added women's industries to the list of subjects taught, and the workrooms are developing rapidly. Flat machine knitting has proved a remunerative employment for women, and several of the workers regularly earn £2 10s. per week, plus augmentation.

I have no desire to weary my readers by the inclusion of further statistics. Sufficient will have been said to make it abundantly clear that in this sphere of activity really useful work is being accom-

plished. Those of us who live busy lives, and come into contact with the philanthropic movement in all its varied aspects, have learned not to expect the accomplishment of sweeping and radical changes in this domain.

The laws of progress are oftentimes difficult to understand and hard to appreciate, but it is as certain as anything very well can be that the things which make for real permanence and stability, the movements which make for material progress, have to be carefully shaped and directed. It is not the spasmodic effort of a fevered imagination cast at random into a world seething with unrest, born of poverty and neglect, which is going to make the universe a better place to live in, but the carefully planned, thoughtfully directed agencies for good, which have a clear vision of the needs of our own times, that will lay the foundation for a happier state of society. These are the instruments to which we are entitled to look for economic salvation in the future.

When thinking of progress in this connection one is forcefully reminded of Kingsley's magnificent reflections :—

“Let us live hard, work hard, go a good pace, get to our journey's end as soon as possible—then let the post-horse get his shoulder out of the collar. I have lived long enough to feel, like the old post-horse, very thankful as the end draws near. . . . Long life is the last thing that I desire. It may be that, as one grows older, one acquires more and more the painful consciousness of the difference between what ought to be done and what can be done, and sits down more quietly when one gets the wrong side of fifty, to let others start up to do for us things we cannot do for ourselves. But it is the highest pleasure that a

man can have who has (to his own exceeding comfort) turned down the hill at last, to believe that younger spirits will rise up after him, and catch the lamp of truth, as in the old lamp-bearing race of Greece, out of his hand before it expires, and carry it on to the goal with swifter and more even feet."

CHAPTER X.

BLIND WORKERS AND TRADE UNION
ACTION.

"The fundamental equation of the orthodox political economist is that the value of everything is proportionate to the cost."

PROFESSOR LEACOCK

SO far it has been my business to trace in some detail the origin and development of the voluntary system of charity as it applies to the education, employment and maintenance of the blind.

It has been indicated that spontaneous personal actions culminated in definite responsibilities being undertaken by aggregations of individuals forming themselves into societies. Thus by gradual processes there has been evolved a definite organisation, not by any means perfect, susceptible to change, containing those elements which make for elasticity and progressive development.

In the evolutionary processes through which the system has passed, it is noteworthy that the least desirable factors have been steadily but surely eliminated, until we have arrived at a condition where it is tolerably safe to affirm that all problems with which the agencies for the blind are confronted in this country are being subjected to scientific treatment at the hands of men and women who are really experts in the tasks assigned to them.

It is tolerably true to say that philanthropists and social reformers of all shades of opinion recognise the truth of the Jefferson axiom that "all men have an

inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." But that assumption is, of necessity, based upon the consideration that in like degree all men are capable of contributing to society a capacity that is denominated at 100 per cent. Those who are less capable of participating in the battle of life and who are thus prevented from giving an exact economic return for the services they themselves derive, cannot, from the very nature of things, demand the same complete standard of life as those who are capable of rendering value for value. It is desirable, however, that such a standard should be conceded to them, but they do not possess the same bargaining power as the man or woman whose activities are unfettered by any kind of physical handicap.

This consideration brings me face to face with the relative value of the laws of combination as they concern the sighted and blind trade unionist.

I have now arrived at the stage in my narrative when I may appropriately discuss some of those difficult economic problems which play such an important part in the affairs, not merely of the sightless worker, but also in the character and conduct of the organisations which in his case are the only available employment agencies.

I make bold to say that neither in the abstract nor yet in the concrete sense are the methods and practices of trade unionist organisations strictly applicable to the blind community. In a very restricted degree—yes, but certainly not more than that. The instrument of the strike as employed by blind workers can have but a negligible effect upon production in so far as it may be invoked at all, and this weapon, therefore, which is ordinarily wielded by large combinations of workers, cannot be made to operate with serious consequences, either to the employer or to the purchasing or con-

suming public when merely employed by blind workers.

If *bona fide* grievances are said to exist, the withdrawal or cessation of our labour can, at the best, only possess propaganda value. It is calculated to incense the public against those who are responsible for the perpetuation of bad conditions. But it is a mistake to assume that such withdrawal of labour can have any real economic effect. For the number employed by any one agency or group of agencies is so small as to be entirely negligible in the sphere of production. It must, however, be remembered that the only legitimate use we can make of any bargaining power we may possess is expressed when we have secured the current piece-work prices in the industries in which we are engaged. Any sums derivable over and beyond that standard are essentially the expressions of good-will exercised by benevolent agencies on our behalf. In other words, such conditions are not the expressions of economic value, and cannot be legitimately a charge upon industry.

From this point of view, therefore, it is obvious that to strike for a minimum wage when that minimum is considerably in excess of true economic value is to strain to their utmost limits the positive functions of trade unionism. It is right and reasonable to argue for a higher standard of life for handicapped people than can be conceded by mere economic values, but to seek to abuse a voluntary agency, or to imagine that you can hold up to ransom a whole community because the spirit of generosity is not exercised so freely as is dictated by an ideal, is attempting to force the pace outside the premises of reason, and is, accordingly, predestined to meet with failure.

I have frequently heard it affirmed, in discussions associated with the interests of blind workers, that it is not charity they require so much as it is a sense of

justice that should permeate the community. It is held that this justice is best expressed by securing conditions under which regular employment will be available and decent remuneration secured.

However commonplace the foregoing observations may seem to be, and however improperly their intrinsic worth may be comprehended by those who use such phrases, the sentences, nevertheless, express, with necessary qualifications and reservations, the correct attitude of mind which should be adopted towards the great problems before us.

If we clearly examine these premises in the light of the facts, it will be at once apparent that this viewpoint, without the qualifications of which I speak, represents nothing but the merest platitudes. The underlying principle, however, is not essentially unreasonable.

Let me proceed to examine the conception of the functions of voluntary charity more closely, in order that we may appreciate the relationship in which we stand in the world of industry. I can best do this by keeping in mind the formula which I have elsewhere recorded, namely, "that having regard to the capacity of the average blind worker and to the character of the industry in which he is engaged, he cannot by his own unaided efforts earn more than sufficient to provide for his daily sustenance."

Submitting average capacity to such a test, it is doubtful even if the industrial worker can generally achieve so much, but, for the purposes of the argument, I will assume that it correctly visualises the present position.

I am surely justified, therefore, in assuming the correctness of this formula in making the submission that some form of charity must be available to supply any legitimate deficiencies that may arise in the matter of enabling individuals to discharge the obligations of

citizenship devolving upon them. Every added responsibility increases this demand upon the common stock of the necessities of life, and to make good such leakages, the act of charity, benevolence, philanthropy, or whatever you may be pleased to term it, is perforce invoked.

If such charity means the requisition of an act of helpfulness or liberality to the poor in the ordinary acceptation of the term, it must carry with it a much wider interpretation in the economic sense, because, if gifts in kind are to be bestowed upon individuals by reason of their inability to produce these things for themselves or to provide the equivalent in the form of service, then exactions are imposed upon the community which represent a tax for the maintenance of an individual or, it may be, a number of individuals.

If, for instance, one examines the laws governing wealth production, it will at once be apparent that any individual claiming the rank of citizenship must either be a wealth producer or an instrument or agency whose functions are directed to the production of wealth, and I think it cannot be denied that if he is to discharge the duties and obligations of citizenship, he must not only be able by his own productive activities to earn sufficient for his personal needs, but be capable also of so functioning as to secure such a margin of wealth as to enable him to minister to the needs of those who are dependent upon him. As I have said elsewhere : " Every citizen who fails to comply with these salient conditions imposes a toll upon the rest of the community, and if society permits him to exist, it does so purely as an act of charity or of good-will, or because of services he has rendered to the State, or because of potential services which society is justified in anticipating from him in the future."

It is obvious from recent happenings that some

of my friends will not find this process of reasoning quite to their taste, for they seem to imagine that the voluntary institutions have vast reserves at their disposal upon which they can call for pecuniary aid regardless of the contribution they make to industry.

That this is a fallacy is recognised by all who have any real knowledge of administrative work on behalf of the blind. The fact is very patent that in this work-a-day world you either have to exist upon the results of your own energies, or else, in order to live, you must impose a toll upon other men's labour. This latter consideration is frequently overlooked when we are discussing the problems which beset us in the kingdom of the blind. I repeat with emphasis, then, that if the sightless industrial worker had exclusively to rely upon his bare capacity for production and the wages that are conditioned entirely as a result of such capacity, he would undoubtedly have a very hard time. Even the most uncompromising supporter of voluntarism is not so foolish as to expect the blind worker to exist under such conditions to-day. Indeed, is it not because of the fact that supplementary aid is available that industrial conditions to-day are what we find them to be?

It is conceded by all and sundry, without reservation, that the standard of life at present obtaining ought to be improved. No useful purpose is served, however, by misleading the general public and enunciating the view that the sightless industrial worker can, under any condition of organised commercial activity or enterprise, win for himself such a standard of life as is desirable by the exercise of his own unaided productive capacity.

It is equally fallacious to assume that any margin of profit can result from the employment of the labour of the blind. The cost of supervision minimises any profit that might otherwise be obtained, whilst the

realisable production is generally at such a low level as to render such profits a mere figment of the imagination.

One fully appreciates the fact that it is wholly distasteful to be regarded as a recipient of charity, but we can do very much ourselves to remove, in some measure at least, the stigma associated with this objection by encouraging efficiency and stimulating production. The greater our activities in the future in the direction of securing efficient industrial training, the less need will there be to rely upon the instrument of benevolence. In proportion as the industrial worker becomes efficient and speedy, in like proportion will the necessity for organised charity be minimised.

It is inconceivable, however, that it will ever be possible wholly to dispense with some form of philanthropic effort. Whether the act of benevolence emanates from private individuals, from the voluntary institutions, from the municipalities, or from the State, it is not rendered less an act of charity because of the medium employed for its administration. Therefore, my conclusion is, that while we are justified in striving to make every member of the blind community as independent as possible, it will always be necessary to make good his handicap by the provision of those material things which his labour value fails to secure for him, and the very fact that the community is perforce called upon to make such provision, I repeat, invokes an act of charity or benevolence which it is foolish to attempt to repudiate.

Though I have no desire to labour the main contentions here stated, it is important that my exact view-point should be properly understood. I, therefore, propose, at the risk of being considered somewhat tedious, further to amplify the opinions expressed above by supplying an illustration which I

have used in a similar connection in a previously published essay.

“ ‘A’ is a sightless industrial worker of average capacity. By his industry he is able to comply with the conditions of our formula : that is, by his own unaided efforts he can give such labour value as yields to him in the form of real wages an amount sufficient to secure a minimum standard of subsistence.” Improving his knowledge by workshop experience, he becomes a better-equipped artisan, and his productivity is accelerated, but only to the extent of enabling him to provide more adequately for his own personal requirements. Eventually, however, the workman marries, and for a limited time, perhaps because of the fact that his partner is also a wage earner, his economic status is correspondingly improved because of the fact that a joint income is available. But this only continues for a period, and is in the very nature of things but a temporary condition. In course of time the woman is no longer a wage earner and becomes economically dependent upon her husband for subsistence. This, in itself, is an additional responsibility, and depletes the workman’s purchasing power. Not only so, however, but every added burden brings into play other and additional factors which militate against his standard of life. The children born of such an union contribute to the general lowering of the standard, and impose greater anxieties upon the bread-winner. Thus the process results in reducing the economic status of the family to a level at which life becomes well-nigh intolerable.

This submission is based upon the assumption that no additional help is forthcoming to the individual apart from his own economic worth.

In the past these conditions have been only too numerous. Possibly they exist to-day in a somewhat

modified form, but the essential difference to be remembered is this—that whereas formerly the scantiest piece-work conditions prevailed, to-day there is no employment agency in the British Isles which does not pay much higher rates than those originally prevailing, along with the recognition that they must also provide supplementary help.

“A” may not be able to obtain the substantial help which his circumstances warrant, but he possesses statutory rights under which he can claim assistance, and, in addition, it is at least satisfactory to realise that the conception of his need is recognised and that efforts—almost titanic efforts—are being made to bring to him and to the class he typifies the succour which everyone admits should be available.

The principle of active help and co-operation is at work in every decent agency throughout the country, and will find its fulfilment only when blind workers are determined to give the maximum degree of value for the services bestowed upon them.

Thus the final conclusion to which I am irresistibly drawn as a result of this process of reasoning is, that in the sphere of industrial employment the earnings of blind workers must be considerably augmented if they are to enjoy a rational existence.

One needs to be more considerate in the language employed towards them, there being no necessity perpetually to be reminding them that they are the recipients of charity. This, to say the least of it, is not the kindest method of conveying to them the idea that they are not of the same economic value as other men. The instrument of benevolence must be made to yield to them an agreed amount, either in money or kind, represented by an assessment of their incapacity. In like manner, however, the workman must be equally disposed in return for that which he receives to give to the employment agency the highest complement of his

productive power. Not only so, but he must strive to attain a creditable standard of efficiency, that his products may compare favourably with the quality of other commodities offered for sale in the competitive arena. Inferiority in workmanship and slothfulness in production are inexcusable.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY OF THE
BLIND.

"There is work for all of us. And there is special work for each, work which I cannot do in a crowd, or as one of a mass, but as one man, acting singly according to my own gifts, and under a sense of my personal responsibilities. I have special work to do, as one individual, who, by God's plan and appointment, has a separate position, separate responsibilities, and a separate work: a work which, if I do not do it, must be left undone."—RUSKIN.

THERE are few people in the world, no matter how severely handicapped they may be, who cannot justify their existence by the performance of useful labour, and among such the members of the sightless community may assuredly take their places.

It has become almost fashionable in certain quarters to sneer at those who are contending, despite present-day difficulties, that real and substantial progress is being made in constructive effort on behalf of the blind. Such people are not influenced by facts; they pay no attention to the overwhelming statistical evidence that is available, and treat comparative standards of progress with complete indifference. To all such my appeal must fail to carry conviction, and I am, therefore, not concerned to placate that kind of opposition which asserts itself merely in the form of destructive criticism.

I believe that every capable blind person should

be usefully employed. The very disability under which he labours is deprived of more than one-half of its adverse consequences when healthy and congenial occupation is secured.

The solution of the problem is largely a question of organisation. Speaking in the economic sense, I affirm that the blind can do much to minimise present difficulties by making the fullest contribution of which they are capable either in the professional or industrial sphere with which they are identified. I believe with Thomas Carlyle that : " Our thoughts, good or bad, are not in our command, but every one of us has at all hours duties to *do*, and these he can do negligently, like a slave, or faithfully, like a true servant. '*Do the duty that is nearest thee*'—that first, and that well ; all the rest will disclose themselves with increasing clearness, and make their successive demand. Were your duties never so small, I advise you, set yourself with double and treble energy and punctuality to do them, hour after hour, day after day."

I have said elsewhere that " the obvious thing to be remembered is the fact that it has been demonstrated beyond all dispute that sightless people, given reasonable educational advantages, technical training and employment, can contribute at least something appreciable towards their own maintenance."

I fully realise that wages in the real sense, in-so-far as they affect the industrial worker, can only partially provide for his sustenance.

It is a fact worthy of note that documentary evidence is available showing that sixty per cent. of those who are to-day employed in the industrial institutions for the blind would not be so engaged if the management committees were to insist upon productivity and efficiency tests. I believe, however, that production is now registered at a low level, not wholly because

the blind are incapable of contributing more substantially to their own maintenance, but because of the fact that, in the past, the idea has not been so much to make efficient workmen, as to require that those who entered industrial institutions for the blind should be merely capable of turning out a passable job regardless of the important factors of real earning power and general efficiency.

Those who to-day are interested in technical education are directing their energies to the production of a type of workman who will give the greatest capacity of which he is capable to the organisation under whose auspices he is employed, in the form of real service ; and this means, in turn, that his productive power will be immensely increased.

We may—doubtless we shall—find it very necessary in the near future to re-organise and re-adjust our facilities for both training and employment more in proportion to the exigencies of trade conditions than has been the case in the past, but this is all to the good, because it implies that we must bend our energies more in the direction of discovering those industries which can be best practised by the blind, and be capable of yielding in the form of wages values more closely approximating to the amounts paid to sighted labour in such occupations as may be found to be practicable. We must re-adjust the mechanism of things so as readily to be able to re-adapt such machinery as we have to meet changing conditions and requirements.

May I reiterate the view-point that, whether we like it or not, legislation has decreed that State activity, municipal enterprise and philanthropic effort must co-operatively act in the future in the determination and ultimate settlement of those vexed problems which have perplexed us in the past and with which we are now confronted.

There are those who say that the obligation is purely a voluntary one ; there are others who take a diametrically opposite view, and assume that nothing of value can be accomplished unless we can secure absolute State management and control ; but, as usual, the middle course presents the most rational road to take, and implies that by enlisting all sympathy and interests, experiences and capacities, we are likely to accomplish more than in allying ourselves with one or other of the alternative schools of thought.

The policy of inter-association and co-operation has much to commend itself to the attention of thoughtful people. It involves a policy which has a two-fold advantage, in that it possesses the sanction of law and the goodwill of those who have done so much in the past, and are prepared to continue their efforts in the future, along constructive lines.

If we are ultimately destined to have State management and control, and if the State organisation and employment of our labour is subsequently to come, it will not be impeded by the adoption of such a line of thought as is here suggested, for in the natural course of things, when voluntary effort exhausts itself, State management must ultimately ensue.

There are very few people to-day who really believe that voluntary effort can discharge the communal duties which we owe to the blind. Those who stand for that point of view have neither the heart nor the capacity to defend this decadent citadel of individualism. I believe with Professor Leacock that "it is the restriction of individualism by the force of organisation and by legislation that has brought to the world whatever social advancement has been achieved by the great mass of the people."

It is very unlikely, whatever the complexion of the Government may be, that in submitting legislation designed to deal with these problems, such

State action will set aside the knowledge and experience of those who are responsible for existing administrations. Progress is not registered by amateurish processes such as those to which we are invited from time to time to give our adherence, and, therefore, there is no danger of these policies being foisted upon the community by the new-fangled notions to which reference is here made.

Elsewhere I have said that most institutions for the blind are unable to face the problem of providing a substantial minimum wage for their employees by reason of the limited resources at their disposal. When it is remembered that in 1923, according to a document recently issued, only about £250,000 was secured by voluntary contributions, it will be obvious that such organisations have a very onerous task before them.

In another chapter I propose to discuss at some length what is erroneously described as "the case for the minimum wage." In the economic sense, as I will endeavour to prove, such a plea cannot possibly be sustained; for the present I am concerned with yet another aspect of the problem—that of the ability of the blind worker to make a real and substantial contribution by his industry to the wage to which he is entitled.

Of course, it is a comparatively easy matter to suggest that, where voluntarism has failed, the State should unreservedly come to the rescue, but surely there is another point of view to which one is entitled to give some consideration?

The object of all our training and education is to produce a good type of citizen. Good citizenship implies that for the common weal it is essential for every unit in society to render service as nearly as may be in proportion to the value he derives from the community in which he lives. He consumes a variety

of foodstuffs, and should be required in return, if he is a boot-maker, a basket-maker, a mat-maker or an engineer, to give the highest productive power of which he is capable to the community in return for the means of subsistence it secures to him.

I am not disposed to accept the view that blindness alone entitles handicapped folk to trade *ad infinitum* on the goodwill of society. They can make, and should be compelled to make, a substantial contribution to the world's work in return for the sustenance they derive. Blindness in itself is no excuse for neglecting to contribute an appreciable effort for the discharge of rational obligations. We are not justified in calling upon the benevolence of the community unless it is clearly established that we are making the very best use of the productive power of which we are capable, in order to secure for ourselves the material things of which we stand in need.

Labour is the contribution which each individual must give towards the general well-being of that organisation which we call society.

“And some can pot begonias and some can bud
a rose,
And some are hardly fit to trust with anything
that grows ;
But they can roll and trim the lawns and sift the
sand and loam,
For the glory of the garden occupieth all who
come.”

If, therefore, after it is demonstrated that we are making the fullest contribution of which we are capable, a deficiency exists, then those who are bearing a handicap which naturally limits their productivity have a just and reasonable claim upon the community.

Elsewhere I have stated that the school of thought which assumes the right of certain individuals to make maximum demands upon society irrespective of their

own disposition and ability to make maximum efforts to provide for their own needs, is suggesting an irrational and impossible theory, and the sooner we recognise the unwisdom of pursuing this line of thought, the better will it be for all concerned.

No State possesses inexhaustible wealth ; it does not come to us as a result of spontaneous genesis. Applied labour must be available to secure every material necessity of which we are in need ; and, if this process of reasoning be accurate, it goes without saying that a definite obligation devolves upon every individual to make the fullest contribution of which he is capable to society in order to lighten generally the obligations which none are free to evade.

I am convinced, then, that the output of the blind worker to-day is lower than it ought to be, due, I think, to a variety of causes, not the least of which is the important consideration that fastens itself upon the imagination of some of these folk that, because they are employed by a charitable agency, they ought not to be expected to produce for commercial valuation. This is a colossal blunder from every point of view, and it is inimical to the best interests of the workman. It has a tendency to lower, in an unseemly manner, an appreciation of his own productive power, and induces wages that are calculated rather from a charitable point of view than from a commercial aspect.

Large numbers of persons are placed in workshops who possess neither real productive capacity nor the aptitude for the job assigned to them ; not only is productivity registered at a low level in consequence, but the cost of supervision is made to soar unreasonably high, while the trade turnover is proportionately small, and the profits from industry thereby rendered negligible.

We have reached a stage in the evolution of our

industrial development such as requires that a clear line of demarcation should be drawn between our industrial undertakings and our charitable agencies, and I affirm that, unless this is rigidly insisted upon, the costs of production in our workshops will remain intolerably high. It would be a comparatively easy matter to show that if it were not for the moral effect involved it would be more economical to permit the blind to remain at home and to pay them a subsistence rate rather than to continue their employment in some industrial undertakings one could mention. The trouble is caused, however, by the faulty methods of organisation and not because it is undesirable to employ the blind.

I emphasise the point once more, which is urged in a recent circular issued by the Ministry of Health, that prior to admission being granted to workshops, the prospective employee should be required, not only to comply with an efficiency test, but he should also give evidence of possessing reasonable speed in production, entitling him to rank as a wage earner. This would lighten the general incidence of cost, and render it possible to deal reasonably and equitably with the wage problem.

The late Herbert Spencer in his essay "*The Man versus the State*" says : " There is no political alchemy by which you can get golden conduct from leaden instincts." So long as we are willing to make demands upon the community which are out of all proportion to the service we render, and are content to see that service continuously declining in volume and in quality, whilst at the same time our exactions are an ever-increasing quantity, so long must our claim to citizenship be viewed with suspicion and distrust.

CHAPTER XII.

METHODS OF REMUNERATION.

"That man, I think, has had a liberal education who has been so trained in youth that his body is the ready servant of his will, and does with ease and pleasure all the work that, as a mechanism, it is capable of; whose intellect is a clear, cold, logic engine, with all its parts of equal strength and in smooth working order, ready, like a steam engine, to be turned to any kind of work, and spin the gossamers as well as forge the anchors of the mind; whose mind is stored with a knowledge of the great and fundamental truths of Nature and of the laws of her operations; one who, no stunted ascetic, is full of life and fire, but whose passions are trained to come to heel by a vigorous will, the servant of a tender conscience; who has learned to love all beauty, whether of Nature or of Art, to bate all vileness, and to respect others as himself."—The late PROFESSOR HUXLEY.

IF the blind worker were an economic factor in the generally accepted sense in which that term is understood, there would be comparatively little difficulty in determining under what methods of remuneration he would usually be required to operate.

The exceptional circumstances under which he has to work are such as to give rise to a variety of conditions which cannot, ordinarily, be regulated by the established processes of collective bargaining.

If the truth must be told and the real issues boldly faced, it will be at once conceded that as an agency of real productive power, our labour is not an instrument of great potential value. This fact gives rise to the growth and development of a set of conditions that

obviously are designed to minimise disabilities by transforming intolerable burdens of affliction into comprehensible limitations or handicaps. This, in short, has been, is still, and must, I think, continue to be the mission of philanthropy throughout the ages ; and who shall say in the broad historical sense that the world has not gained immensely from this luminous conception ?

As students of labour conditions as they apply to blind workers, we are not free to ignore these circumstances, and even if we were disposed to do so, the facts would be irresistibly borne in upon us by the exigencies of competitive factors entirely beyond our control.

There are some sightless workmen who rightly pride themselves upon their craftsmanship and skill, and I joy with them in that they have thus triumphed over many obstacles. It still remains, however, that they have some limitations by which perforce they are distinguished from other members of their craft, and that if they would seem to be super-men, they are only able to carry off that distinction in the little circle in which they move—the circle comprised in the main of men and women less capable and less efficient than themselves.

When these truths dawn upon us, our egotism receives a rude shock and our unreasoning pride is wounded, but by-and-bye, a little introspection and sober reflectiveness permits us “to see ourselves as others see us,” and thus one is led to face the facts of life with courage and equanimity.

When we have occasionally to discuss wage problems in some particular sphere of employment, we are apt to exaggerate our claims in such a way as to convey the impression that we are at all times and under all conditions able to act as free economic units, capable of selling our labour in the competitive arena.

Such an attitude is, of course, foredoomed to failure, for it deceives none save those misguided people by whom it is enunciated.

Though it is true that economic circumstances confine within strictly prescribed limits the sphere in which we can advantageously employ our labour, it is equally true to say that those who engage such labour should not be permitted to do so unless as a basic principle they are prepared to observe the practices and conditions normally prevailing in the occupation or industry where they are capable of economic application to the blind. In other words, standard rates or trade union conditions should be as rigidly observed by the Board of Management of an industrial institution for the blind as by any private employment agency engaging trade union labour. I am aware that these premises are almost universally conceded. The real difficulties begin to manifest themselves only when we are led to discuss matters of remuneration over and above standard rates of payment or systems designed to supersede that under which payment by results is regulated.

I have examined in closest detail most of the systems of remuneration obtaining in the institutions for the blind in Great Britain, and, in my judgment, none of them can be regarded as entirely satisfactory. By this I do not mean to infer that there is a disposition to evade such responsibilities on the part of those whose obligation it is to bring into operation wage conditions which they know to be entirely unsatisfactory. The problem is not an easy one of solution. It bristles with difficulties, and those who have been disposed to look upon the principle of applying a minimum wage as offering the most reasonable alternative to piece-work and day wages, have been profoundly dissatisfied with the results.

Minimum wages have invoked the opposition of

most employment agencies because, whatever fixed amounts may be named, they represent purely arbitrary figures.

If we arrived at a minimum wage by the same methods as those adopted by ordinary employers of labour, the position of the blind of the community would be infinitely more unsatisfactory than we find it to-day. It is generally understood in fixing the minimum that it represents, in some degree, at least, the average earning capacity of the people employed in the industry. This test could not, however, be applied to the labour of the blind without being followed by most disastrous results. How, then, are we to give satisfaction in arriving at a minimum wage by adopting a purely arbitrary standard, which, if we are in any degree dependent upon profits for the maintenance of the standard wage, will at once exclude the labour of the blind from the competitive market by reason of the increased cost of production which is thereby necessarily incurred?

I am not proposing at this juncture to discuss the principle of the minimum wage in detail, but merely endeavouring to contrast this principle with other methods of remuneration.

I have said elsewhere that what we have to determine in the near future is simply this—how far is the relative value of our production in relationship to wage conditions capable of supplying our needs, and what, if anything, beyond our mere productive value have we the right to claim.

These questions in relation to methods of remuneration I propose to discuss in detail; but first let me make the position quite clear by saying that in so far as we are able to produce for public consumption, in so far only have we the right to demand remuneration on such a basis as that which would ordinarily be conceded to sighted persons employed in the same

occupation. In other words, whatever additional help or remuneration is given to us beyond the value of our productive work, that additional help, whether it comes from the State, the municipalities, or from private benevolence, is a form of philanthropy which it is intensely foolish to try to under-value or seek to christen in some euphemistic phraseology. As instruments of production, we are entitled to the value of the work we perform. As persons whose limitations are imposed by a handicap we are powerless to control, we have some claim upon the benevolent consideration of those who compose the civilised State. Exactly in what form that assistance can best be given should be a matter not so much for the controversialist or the political economist, but rather should it be the concern of those who have to provide whatever surplus may be necessary properly to house, feed and clothe those who must, of necessity, rely upon these additional forms of assistance.

By this suggestion I do not mean to infer that the recipients should have no voice in the determination of their own destinies ; but obviously whatever action is taken must, in the last resort, be subordinated to the good-will and clemency of those who are called upon to share the results of their labour with those who cannot, by reason of physical infirmities or mental disabilities, make adequate provision for their own needs.

We have all heard of combinations of blind workers being induced to withdraw their labour because the managements of the industrial organisations with which they were associated refused to provide larger charitable subsidies than they (the workers) felt they ought to enjoy. Such an action is not the result of a conception of trade unionism ; it is lawlessness and a form of anarchy that is at all times reprehensible. These same people, from almost every platform to

which they have access, perpetually declaim against and denounce the institution of benevolence because, forsooth, the administrators decline to appropriate all available charity for the exclusive benefit of persons who are permanently employed. Such an action cannot be tolerated. It bespeaks muddle-headedness of the worst kind, and that want of clear guidance accounts in a large measure for the misunderstandings which exist to-day. I repeat that this stupid conduct is foolishly talked of as trade union action, when, in reality, to speak metaphorically, it is as far removed from the statutory objects of trade unionism as we are from the planet Mars.

CHAPTER XIII.

METHODS OF REMUNERATION
(CONTINUED)

*“ What then ? Shall we sit idly down and say
 ‘ The day hath come ; it is no longer day ’ ?
 The night hath not yet come ; we are not quite
 Cut off from labour by the falling light ;
 Something remains for us to do or dare ;
 And as the evening twilight fades away,
 The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.”*

H. W. LONGFELLOW.

THOSE readers whose powers of endurance and patience have enabled them to travel so far with me will, I think, agree that from time to time I have endeavoured to lay stress upon the fact that the disability of blindness does not of itself necessarily preclude us from leading a life of usefulness. It is not possible, however, to concede the point that this determination to overcome difficulties must of itself and by itself rank as pure economic utility. It must be accompanied not only by a desire to succeed, but by a determination to give value to the community for services enjoyed. By this I mean to convey the impression that the whole of our educational system should be so directed as to make it possible to achieve definite and tangible results in the sphere of industrial employment. It is not sufficient merely to teach a man to do a job efficiently—he must be taught to do it as well as possible ; that goes without saying, but he must be made to realise that expedition and despatch

with the quality of efficiency are points to be remembered in the world of production, and are the considerations which in the last resort determine his standard of material comfort.

We are reminded of a saying of Lord Chesterfield which is the very essence of our philosophy in respect of these matters :—

“ Little minds are in a hurry when the object proves (as it commonly does) too big for them ; they run, they puzzle, confound and perplex themselves ; they want to do everything at once, and never do it at all. But a man of sense takes the time necessary for doing well the thing he is about ; and his haste to despatch a business only appears by the continuity of his application to it ; he pursues it with cool steadiness, and finishes it before he begins any other.”

One of the inherent difficulties with which the craft instructor is invariably confronted in our industrial training establishments is to convey to the apprentice the necessity for being both speedy and efficient.

Piece-work rates of wages are unsatisfactory because of the lack of conception on the part of many workers that they must strenuously endeavour to justify their places by making a reasonable and sensible contribution in quality and quantity to the world's work. Naturally, the disability of blindness is such as to detract from speed, but our whole objective is lost if we yield to this circumstance without resolving to minimise the handicap which it places upon us.

Having said so much, it is perfectly natural to assume that if the worker is willing to make the effort to which reference is here made, he should of necessity be guaranteed reasonable compensation for the extra physical and mental exertion to which he is thereby subjected. I mean by this that so long as men and women are prepared to give the best of which they

are capable in real service, it should follow as a necessary corollary that they are certain to receive a reasonable standard of remuneration.

This brings me to an examination of the methods of remuneration that are now in operation, and I am at once prompted to say that none of them, in my judgment, are quite satisfactory. I am anxious to see the inauguration of a system under which a man or woman, though necessarily slow in production, shall at the same time receive such grants in aid of wages as will guarantee a reasonable standard of life. The additional help he may need should not be made a charge on the industrial side of the undertaking with which he is associated, nor should that consideration be used as a lever to compel really speedy and efficient workmen to take less in the form of wages, or additional forms of help, by reason of the fact that slower workmen must have financial consideration. By implication, the scale of augmentation of wages approved by the Central Advisory Committee on the Welfare of the Blind acts as a deterrent rather than as an instrument for speeding up production. It is true that the poorer type of workman receives fairly liberal consideration in the form of augmentation, but the pernicious system of penalising the really efficient in order that more money may be available for the less competent is a principle which in practice is operating detrimentally in a variety of ways. It is leading to the conception that, after all, speed in production is not of very material importance, because the more rapidly a man can work the less consideration will he receive from the relief side of the undertaking.

It is granted at once that this conception never entered the minds of those who were responsible for promulgating the present scales. It was felt that the workman, generally speaking, would be glad to free himself of charitable obligations, but in practice, like

many other fanciful theories, the results are disappointing. Under the scales of augmentation now available, to deduct so much from each shilling earned may be justifiable to a limited extent, but the scales should be so graduated as to encourage men to make as much money as possible by their own unaided efforts, so as to call less upon the charitable side of the undertaking.

Under certain arrangements now operating it is arguable that a man earning 20/- per week derives more financial help than a man whose labour value is worth, say, 32/- or 33/- per week. Indeed, I am of opinion that there should be some incentive given to really efficient workmen to approach as nearly as may be the standard of earning power of their sighted colleagues engaged in the same craft.

By this process we would unquestionably do something of a substantial character to foster the earning power of the blind worker. The present arrangements act in the converse fashion, and thus we get a condition of things under which a subsidy to low earning power helps to deplete the general standard and thereby register real wages at a comparatively low level.

I have said in another essay that "an examination of the facts shows very clearly that real wages represent but a small item of the total cost of employing the labour of the blind, and there is a positive danger of our industrial system degenerating into an arrangement under which our institutions become nothing more nor less than mere relief stations." In order to obviate this kind of thing and to encourage productive effort, it is essential that the workman should be made to feel that increased effort sensibly represents an increased and improved standard of comfort, and that his exertions both merit and receive the proper reward of faithful service.

I contend that this important consideration is overlooked in nearly all the scales of augmentation of wages that are now in operation, and repeat that under existing conditions there would appear to be no real incentive making for productivity. Men and women engaged under present arrangements are rewarded not for the work they do, but in consideration of their inability or disinclination to perform a reasonable amount of labour, and the net result is that the efficient worker is actually and really penalised because he is made to be more of a charitable subject, and less of an artisan, by reason of the restrictive character of the system under which he is employed. By all means be as philanthropic as possible to the really inefficient, but it is absolutely essential to separate charitable gifts from the due rewards to which the worker is entitled from the pursuit of his industry. Nothing which is apt to militate against the development of incentive should be found in any of these schemes, yet I am afraid that in all of them there are to be found elements of this kind which have probably crept in and been maintained under the quite mistaken impression that they express acts of kindness designed in the best interests of the blind worker.

The industrial institutions for the blind sustain the greatest losses and incur the heaviest liabilities by the employment of slow and inefficient workers, and this vital consideration ought not to be overlooked when scales for the augmentation of wages are being propounded. If it is found inexpedient so to graduate the scales of augmentation as to safeguard what one might call "the theory of maximum initiative" and the rewards consequent upon its exercise, then there would appear to be no alternative than to suggest that a reasonable flat rate of augmentation should in all cases be paid, leaving the workman free to exercise his skill in order that he may win for himself and his

family the highest amount possible in the form of economic wages. Such a flat rate should, of course, be reasonable in amount and bear a relative value to the assessment of the disability of blindness. This arrangement would, I claim, develop and stimulate initiative, whilst providing a system of remuneration at once equitable in its incidence and essentially reasonable in its application. At the same time it would contain the general curative treatment for much of the discontent which we know to be rife throughout our industrial system.

Present systems of augmentation are subversive of all well-established commercial usage and practice. Is it not true that in business a man is never penalised because he is more efficient than his competitors? A reward is given to him for the ability he possesses, and he is encouraged thereby to proceed. My desire is to see the same principle operating in workshops for the blind, for by its exercise we know that the best results can be secured. It is wrong to penalise the man who by sheer physical and mental exertion strives to triumph over his handicap by attaining a standard of speed and proficiency such as brings him nearer to the plane of an ordinary workman. It may be argued that the flat rate of compensation involves hardship as far as the low-wage earner is concerned, but it will be at once obvious that if an assessment of disability provides an amount which is not equal to meeting the man's ordinary responsibilities when added to his earning power, then recourse must be had to other forms of assistance and to resources ordinarily outside the purview of a trading concern.

In the next chapter I propose to draw attention to the costly character of conducting our employment agencies for the blind, and to provide statistical evidence in proof of the contention that the present systems, whether they express themselves in the

forms of sliding scales or minimum wages, are each ill-conceived methods of dealing with an exceedingly delicate and complex social problem.

We cannot bring Utopia into being by a mere desire for change, nor are we finite beings able to suggest a system of society which will be good enough for the folk of two or three generations hence. We believe with Carlyle that :

“ To shape the whole future is not our problem ; but only to shape faithfully a small part of it, according to rules already known. It is perhaps possible for each of us, who will with due earnestness enquire, to ascertain clearly what he, for his own part, ought to do ; this let him, with true heart, do, and continue doing. The general issue will, as it has always done, rest well with a higher intelligence than ours. . . . This day thou knowest ten commanded duties, seest in thy mind ten things which should be done for one that thou doest ! Do *one of them* ; this of itself will show the ten others which can and shall be done.”

CHAPTER XIV.

METHODS OF REMUNERATION
(CONTINUED)

PRODUCTION AND THE MINIMUM INCOME

"Behold us here, so many thousands, millions, and increasing at the rate of fifty every hour. We are right willing and able to work; and on the Planet Earth is plenty of work and wages for a million times as many. We ask, if you mean to lead us towards work, to try to lead us—by ways new, never yet heard of until this new unheard-of Time? Or if you declare that you cannot lead us? And expect us to remain quietly unled, and in a composed manner perish of starvation? What is it you expect of us? What is it that you mean to do with us? This question, I say, has been put in the hearing of all Britain, and will again be put, and ever again, till some answer be given it."—

CARLYLE.

IT was Hubbard, I think, who, in expounding his creed, said :

"I believe in hands that work,
Brains that think,
And hearts that love."

In this simple but all-embracing faith most of us, did we but fully realise it, proceed to the performance of our tasks in this work-a-day world. It may be that sometimes our thoughts are distracted and our attention diverted from the simple duties which the conditions of life rigidly and quite properly impose upon us. We are apt, in effect, to affirm that everyone should perform a legitimate share of the world's work; but when this truism is made to apply to ourselves, our enthusiasm for the doctrine presents less roseate hues.

It is so easy to profess adherence to these high-souled principles when they apply to others, yet so difficult for some of us to swallow the wholesome tonic for our own rehabilitation. Yet, if the truth must be told, we cannot afford to preach doctrines to others which we are unwilling to practise ourselves, for the simple reason that sooner or later we are bound to be discovered, and such discovery can only lead to our ultimately being repudiated.

We of the blind community are much too apt to think that our physical disabilities render us immune from many of the obligations of citizenship. We are inclined to consider ourselves citizens, however, without giving any substantial evidence of our disposition to yield the best that is in us to society in return for the discharge of those services which we are powerless to undertake for ourselves.

In the sphere of industry we are certainly not entitled by any inalienable right to claim a higher standard of remuneration than can be determined by our productive capacity. All other and additional material wealth that comes to us is the result of an ethical and moral conception that arises spontaneously from the community in which we live.

It is absolute futility to account or endeavour to account for our status otherwise, and the sooner we dismiss from our minds the spurious sentimental twaddle with which we have been disposed to disguise the truth when discussing these economic problems, the better will it be, ultimately, for all concerned.

I have heard something of late concerning a demand for a minimum wage to be paid to all blind workers irrespective of the occupation in which they may be engaged, and it would appear also to be irrespective of their earning capacity.

In the first place it will be agreed, I think—theoretically, at all events—that a standard of true

civilization can only be said to have been attained when every person born into the world shall be secured of the elementary necessities of existence—proper housing, proper clothing, proper and adequate sustenance. I find myself in general accord with Mr. Hamilton Fyfe when he declares that :

“National greatness is not to be won by possessing a formidable military power, and repudiating all the restraints of honour and humane feeling ; nor yet by building an unconquerable Navy, and letting a quarter of the population grow up stunted for want of decent conditions of life.

“Institutions, no matter how ancient or how dignified by tradition, were made for man, and not man for institutions. If they irk, instead of easing him, as institutions were meant to do, they can, and must, be swept away.”

You can call this faith by any name you please, but it would be difficult to dispute the fundamental basis upon which such contentions rest.

It is conceded, however, that the majority of those who would be beneficiaries under such a state of society would, in return, be capable of yielding 100 per cent. of capacity to the common weal, and thereby making good to the community for that which they consumed in infancy and adolescence. Those, however, who are less capable are not an economic proposition in this sense, and must continue to be, therefore, a charge upon their neighbours. It is for us, by the exercise of our intelligence and capacity, to determine how little or how much shall be the incidence of that cost.

Unless we are prepared in the industrial sphere to do better work and to make our productive output more nearly approximate to the standard of life we

are anxious to obtain, the struggle for what we falsely call "a minimum wage" is calculated to be a very protracted one. The term "minimum wage" is likely to convey quite a wrong impression to those who really value the meaning of words, because in economic theory the demand is unsupported by any basic principle so far as the blind are concerned.

Elsewhere I have contended that when minimum wages are being determined, the basis, generally speaking, is reached by computing the amount of work that can be performed by the average man, over a period, in the industry affected. This standard would be quite useless of application so far as the blinded operative is concerned, for such a wage being entirely determined by his productive capacity would represent a lower standard of existence than he possesses to-day under the voluntary system. Indeed, upon pure economic grounds the term "minimum wage" as applied to the blind is not only foolish and mischievous, but it is wholly irrelevant to the discussion of comparative standards of existence, for there is no question of either economic theory or practice involved.

I am aware that a solution of the problem is suggested by the advocacy of the view that the blinded operative should be entitled to the same standard of remuneration as that paid to unskilled labour employed by the county or county borough authority in which he resides. Here again the term "remuneration" is not less fallacious and misleading, even were it assumed that such standards were practicable. I fear it would ultimately lead to disastrous results, for the municipalities, as we know them to-day, would not be disposed to undertake ever-increasing expenditure in matters of education, training and employment from which no substantial economic return is possible. The vast disparity that would arise in

standards of remuneration makes the operation of the principle quite impracticable, for it must be remembered that the county or county borough authorities would have to provide at least 50 per cent. to present labour values—or to the economic earnings of the blind—to secure them anything approaching a reasonable weekly wage.

Is it conceivable, assuming this obligation were so accepted, that the self-same local authorities would bestir themselves to extending educational and industrial facilities which, of necessity, would substantially increase their financial obligations, and from which they would never be likely to reap an economic return?

Those who profess to believe this kind of thing would appear to have been endowed with far more faith than common sense. The late Lord Morley once wrote :

“Truth, said Bacon, has been rightly named the daughter of Time. The new idea does not spring up uncaused and by miracle. If it has come to me, there must be others to whom it has only just missed coming. If I have found my way to the light, there must be others groping for it very close in my neighbourhood. My discovery is their goal. They are prepared to receive the new truth, which they were not prepared to find for themselves. The fact that the masses are not yet ready to receive, any more than to find, is no reason why the possessor of the new truth should run to hide under a bushel the candle which has been lighted for him. If the time has not come for them, at least it has come for him.”

Ipso facto, I agree that it is highly desirable that every blind adult should enjoy what I term a

“ minimum income ” in order that he may be able to administer to his temporal needs, but I cannot for a moment base this requirement on any economic foundation.

The essence of political science is not immediately concerned with what must happen to those who cannot give reciprocal values for the services they derive. Therefore, we must deal with the problem in another way, and view it from a rather loftier plane.

If this plea for a “ minimum income ” is to become a subject of practical politics, the case of the blind will best be met by making the responsibility a national charge rather than a municipal obligation. I would rather see a standard of life determined on a national basis to which all could contribute : the State, by grants in aid, the municipalities, by further sums in augmentation, the voluntary agencies, by services and money in proportion to their capacity. We should then have vast scope for research, and there would be no disposition to place impediments in the way of our progressive development.

In other words, I would like to see established a national wages board, competent to take cognisance of general conditions of remuneration, to safeguard output and to maintain it at a reasonably high level, whilst at the same time determining the subsidies to be paid and generally so overhauling industrial machinery as to make it wear the impress of greater efficiency.

We must, however, do something sensible and tangible to narrow the margin which lies between our present productive capacity and the amount necessary to provide for our subsistence. This can and should be done without delay.

As I write, I have before me a list of twenty-five of the largest industrial institutions for the blind in the country, with the number of persons employed,

their average wages and augmentation grants, together with the cost per unit of those employed, the total amount of sales and the amounts from voluntary sources which must be obtained to maintain the organisations at the present level of efficiency. There are some things in this connection that stand out very clearly and to which I must necessarily direct attention though the task be ever so unpalatable.

I have always cherished the belief that, given a decent standard of wages, together with liberal grants in augmentation thereof, we would experience the maintenance of output and encourage efficiency. Unfortunately, like many other precious convictions, it is entirely unsupported by the facts, for I have reluctantly to confess that wherever minimum wages are paid or high subsidies met with, there, I profoundly regret to say, output has unreasonably declined, whilst there is no evidence extant to show that there has been any appreciable improvement in the direction of greater efficiency.

This chapter of my narrative has already outgrown in length the space available for a discussion of the subject or a recitation of the facts that lead me to the final conclusions I have to express. These will be given subsequently, but for the present I have sorrowfully to confess that the workers themselves are doing more to impair their own credit and lower their own wages than any action of the employing agencies could possibly undertake in this retrogressive direction.

Why should we be ashamed to tell a workman, simply because he is blind, that by his industry he is not making a reasonable contribution towards his own maintenance when he possesses the capacity? Why should we not urge him to do so? It is in the interests of all; and the really self-respecting workman must essay this task boldly, even though his so-called leaders, for fear of giving offence and because of en-

dangering their miserable salaries, lack the prescience which ought to enable them to visualise the disasters which assuredly wait upon the continuity of the present policy.

CHAPTER XV.

THE VALUE OF PERSONAL INITIATIVE.

“ Instead of saying that man is the creature of circumstance, it would be nearer the mark to say that man is the architect of circumstance. It is character which builds an existence out of circumstance. From the same material one man builds palaces, another hovels, one warehouses, another villas. Bricks and mortar are mortar and bricks until the architect can make them something else.”

THERE is a piece of wholesome philosophy given to us by Samuel Smiles which particularly applies to the situation I have been discussing in the recent chapters of this little work. He says :—

“ He who allows his application to falter, or shirks his work on frivolous pretext, is on the sure road to ultimate failure. Let any task be undertaken as a thing not possible to be evaded, and it will soon come to be performed with alacrity and cheerfulness. Charles IX of Sweden was a firm believer in the power of will, even in youth. Laying his hand on the head of his youngest son, when engaged in a difficult task, he exclaimed, ‘ He *shall* do it ! He *shall* do it ! ’ The habit of application becomes easy in time, like every other habit. Thus persons with comparatively moderate powers will accomplish much if they apply themselves wholly and indefatigably to one thing at a time.”

On more than one occasion I have pointed to the absurdity of some of my friends unwisely assuming

that because one is obliged to oppose the current notion which surrounds the application of the principle of the minimum wage, one is necessarily in opposition to the sanity of the view that a minimum income should and must be available for all *bona-fide* blind workers.

My quarrel, if such it be, with present methods of remuneration expresses itself in this way—that whilst one is anxious to do all that is humanly possible to protect the weak and inefficient worker, the better type of artisan must, in no circumstances, be sacrificed to accommodate the less efficient.

I have said repeatedly that any financial arrangements contemplated for the betterment of the conditions of the blind should be based, not on the assumption merely of the needs of the least capable, but on the possibilities of the most efficient. Rather ought we to recognise that incentive must be available for the encouragement and stimulation of capacity and efficiency, and that such capacity and efficiency should not be permitted to go unrewarded merely because comparatively large numbers of indigent folk can be said to display by their industry no particular economic worth.

To express myself in another way, I would say that from the recent statistical data available, I can only arrive at one conclusion, *i.e.*, that an unfortunately large percentage of the labour of the blind is of such a negligible character in value that, viewed merely as an economic proposition, it were better to pay such so-called workers an agreed monetary allowance and to remove them entirely from the competitive arena.

There are, of course, perhaps, much higher motives to be considered. This is at once readily conceded, but I am here dealing with hard scientific facts and am endeavouring to show that there is no justification for the miserably low and inferior standard

of production that generally obtains to-day. Those who defend present arrangements are doing a great disservice to the blind community, and incidentally permanently injuring the progressive development of the people whom I presume they are most anxious to serve.

No one can look at the following figures without being forcibly impressed with their significance, and I repeat again : however unfortunate it may be, it remains true to-day as it did three or four years ago, that where minimum wages are paid or high scales of augmentation obtain, there production is fast becoming a negligible quantity.

I find for the year ending March 31st, 1923, the following results :—In twenty-five of the largest workshops for the blind in England and Wales there were 1,286 blind workers permanently employed. Allowances have been made for the large number of persons who were on short time in the institutions during that period. The figures deal exclusively with whole time employment. The wages paid over the same period amounted to £65,255, and the supplements (an item to which I desire to draw particular attention) were actually in excess of the wages paid, the figure being £65,454. The sale of manufactured goods realised £268,726 ; the average trade deficit per blind unit £22 ; the augmentation per blind unit £51 ; the cost to agencies for every blind person employed £73. The trade deficit amounted to £28,067. The total cost to agencies for employment of the blind was £93,521. The amount paid to sighted workers was £41,255.

The disquieting factors of the situation are to be found, firstly, in the relatively high costs of production and the comparatively small output, together with the alarming result as expressed in the statistics before me, namely, that more money is being paid in aug-

mentation than is being derived in the form of real wages. Before the introduction of the system of subsidies one is compelled to admit that wages, in the economic sense, were far too low. Now, however, wage conditions have been improved, high prices are being paid for commodities, and the trade union standards for the most part are rigidly observed. Yet, with all this, the calls upon benevolence have increased out of all proportion to the results we are deriving in productive returns.

I am not contending for a moment that the worker is wholly to blame for this condition of things. Something must be attributed to the character of the industries in which he is engaged. Nevertheless, I respectfully submit that the methods of remuneration now employed have played, and continue still to exercise, an unsatisfactory influence in keeping down production, because we have failed to appreciate the cardinal consideration that is involved, namely, to reward industry and capacity adequately. In no way, other than by such a recognition, can we encourage the capable worker to give of his best, both in craftsmanship and speed, to the service of the particular organisation with which he may be associated, and in no other way can an honest endeavour be expressed with the ultimate object of narrowing the margin between real earning power and standards that are only maintainable by charitable subsidies.

It is unfortunate for those of us who have repeatedly^T declared our belief in the righteousness of guaranteeing a reasonable minimum income to sightless workers to find that, wherever and whenever an honest attempt has been, or is being, made to give effect to this doctrine, in every recorded instance the experiment should have been followed by such disastrous results. It is perfectly understandable, however, that any system of wage payments which is intended to super-

sede that of piece-work rates of remuneration is almost certain to be followed by a reduction in output.

No fair-minded person, with a knowledge of prevailing conditions, would complain of this. When, however, it is seen that the abolition of piece-work results in a shrinkage of production to such an appalling degree as to render earning capacity a comparatively negligible quantity, then those of us who value straightforward dealing and honesty of purpose are driven more closely to examine, not merely the foundations of our economic beliefs, but, what is perhaps of far greater importance, to enquire into the astounding mental attitude of those who excuse and condone such serious lapses.

There can be no valid defence of the conduct of those who bring about results such as I have described, and I propose to make none.

It is clear from the statistical evidence available that all efforts made in the direction of stabilising wages have invariably left out of count the human attributes of ability and efficiency. It is assumed quite incorrectly that an average wage should be regarded as practically the equivalent in value of services rendered. This means, in effect, that although certain wage conditions may be correct approximations for average services, the more efficient and the more capable are penalised simply because it is essential to make up the deficiencies of those whose market value, from the labour point of view, is almost negligible.

The truth is, speaking generally, that the type of industry in which the blind worker is usually engaged is of such a character as to make it well-nigh impossible, even for the most skilled sighted artisan employed in the same occupation, to earn a reasonable subsistence. Therefore, the blind worker is all the time penalised, not only by reason of the character of the industry in which he is engaged being of itself

generally unremunerative, but because he has also to contend with a physical disability which limits his productivity.

It is, I think, nothing more than an accident of industrialism that certain industries were originally selected for the employment of the blind ; for it is quite obvious that had we been faced with the problem to-day, we would certainly not have selected the class of occupations that are now being generally practised. It is evident, too, that in the near future we shall have to concern ourselves more immediately with the economic possibilities of the industries in which blind folk are being trained.

The voluntary institutions will find that the financial burden with which they are confronted involves an expenditure that cannot be met by ordinary methods. They have exploited and explored the possibilities of obtaining funds well-nigh to the limit of capacity. Moreover, as national and municipal responsibility for that expenditure will have to be greatly extended, the one thing that is self-evident is the fact that we shall not be able to persuade these authorities to continue making such expenditure unless we can show ever-increasing possibilities of securing a reasonable economic return.

In my judgment, the time must come when every industry will be required to bear its quota of responsibility for the employment of disablement, and it remains to be seen whether we shall be in a position so to organise our productive capacity as to earn by our labour the equivalent of a decent standard of life, or whether the industry with which we are immediately concerned will be required to bear the incidence of any deficiency that may arise in consequence of the employment of less competent factors.

There will probably always be a necessity for special institutions for the employment of the blind,

but I rather think that as the years go by, the tendency will be to reserve these organisations for the assistance of the less efficient. Whereas, it is to be hoped that the more competent craftsmen will find places in the less restricted spheres of industry.

The objective of the educationalist in the affairs of the blind should not only be so to train his pupils as to make them competent to earn something by industry, but rather should the attitude be one of so equipping the student as to render him capable of yielding in return for his sustenance the highest possible economic value. Unfortunately, this objective is not nearly sufficiently emphasised in the curriculum which our students are required to master. Low productive power is so frequently associated with an enfeebled condition of health or a poor mental condition, that we are apt to base our requirements on incomplete standards rather than to exert ourselves in the direction of aiming at a reasonably lofty ideal.

The figures I have quoted earlier in this chapter demonstrate this point of view beyond any doubt whatever, and unless we do something constructive in character to remedy the defects which every sane student of industrial affairs has long ago detected, we must inevitably decline in industrial power and efficiency. It is not right or reasonable that we should be paying more in the direction of subsidies than the economic labour we are able to extract from such industry is capable of yielding. There is obviously something wrong, and it is to be found in the fact, I fear, that all our present methods of remuneration are directed rather to protect the inefficient than to safeguard and encourage, to stimulate and strengthen the enterprise of those whose labour does possess a relative economic value.

CHAPTER XVI.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND
EMPLOYMENT.

"And remember, in the second place, what would happen if all the little people in the world held up their littleness like a shield before them, as you hold up yours. Grant that you are as small as you think you are, you are the average size of moral and intellectual humanity. Let all the Merozes in the land be humble like you, and where shall be the Army? Only when men like you wake up and shake the paralysis of their humility away, shall we begin to see the dawn of that glorious millennium for which we sigh, which will consist, not in the transformation of men into angels, nor in the coming forth of a few colossal men to be the patterns and the champions of life, but simply in each man, through the length and breadth of the great world, doing his best."—

PHILLIPS BROOKS.

IN this final chapter I desire briefly to direct attention to some of the difficulties associated with vocational training and employment. Happily, we have reached a condition of things when it can be said with tolerable certainty that whenever a case of particular urgency arises, we can, without very much difficulty, secure the necessary financial assistance with which to provide a liberal education for young people who would be likely to profit by such a course of training.

Our main trouble, however, does not arise in this connection, for it is now proved beyond all dispute that most of the schools and universities are accessible to blind students. The greatest difficulties we experience may be said to be roughly classified as two in number. The one is our failure to give sufficient

guidance and direction at the proper time to the young student in the selection of his calling, and the other is rather expressed in our failure to set up adequate machinery for securing the necessary opportunities of employment immediately his period of training has been completed. I think it was Professor Jacks who said :—

“The main field for social service lies inside, and not outside, our normal occupations. Broadly speaking, the whole mass of occupations in our highly specialised society is susceptible of a far higher degree of excellence than they have yet attained, or than anybody else has thought of putting into them, and would be discovered as so susceptible if intelligence and morality were concentrated on the problem.

“All the ‘ goods ’ which society produces might be infinitely better—with salutary reactions—to correspond on the minds and characters of all who produce them and all who use them.”

Notwithstanding these primary weaknesses, however, there is a considerable element of satisfaction to be found in the fact that every year shows a steadily increasing number of blind candidates preparing for an *entrée* into those vocations in which they will be called upon to use their mental powers rather than to rely upon manual dexterity.

This is satisfactory so far as it goes, but sooner or later such a situation is bound to develop considerable difficulties, unless we are prepared without delay to equip one or other of the agencies with financial support to enable it to function wisely and speedily on behalf of the large number of students, most of whom will be relegated to the ranks of the unemployed unless we devise the machinery necessary for their proper protection.

We have already had deplorable experiences in connection with the training of blind persons for the teaching profession, in which, apparently, there is not the slightest chance of securing constant work for even the most modest number of those who take such training. I am not prepared to say who is to blame for encouraging students to qualify for this kind of work. What I do assert, however, is expressed in the bald fact that those who are responsible for such training should have at their disposal reasonable alternative channels of education that are likely to meet with the acceptance of such students.

There can be no disputing the fact that Worcester College for the Higher Education of the Blind and the Royal Normal College for the Blind, Upper Norwood, are doing magnificent work, but in a large measure their activities are neutralised, because there is no well-equipped organisation which in any real sense can be said to have assumed the responsibility for conducting effective and systematic after-care work. Ordinarily, the county associations do not function for this purpose. It involves activities that are outside the scope of such agencies, and not even the semblance of an organisation catering for the special needs of this important section of the blind community exists. Broadly speaking, one would desire to see an agency established that will take cognisance of the needs of every young person who is being prepared for any one of the learned professions. Such an agency should be competent to advise where such counsel is necessary, and should make, or cause to be made, systematic efforts to place every candidate immediately his course of training has been satisfactorily completed. Care should be taken to avoid preparation for those professions in which experience has shown that no likelihood of success is possible; while, on the other hand,

a systematic development and exploration of other avenues ought to be sedulously cultivated.

It is of practically no use attempting to localise such efforts. The organisation of which I speak should be national in its scope, with the possibility of utilising the machinery of every local agency so far as that machinery would be capable of application. In like manner, local influences should be available to assist the national agency in order that in preferring claims of candidates for positions of responsibility and trust, the association for the after-care of professional men and women could count with certainty upon helpful co-operation in every part of the country.

There is a natural reluctance on the part of many of us to advocate the formation of additional agencies for dealing with the problems associated with the care of the blind. Already there are far too many such agencies, leading as they do to an unjustifiable increase in administrative charges, and not always making for efficiency.

In the particular instance under review, however, there is no national agency that may be said to be really responsible for the task I have outlined, and the work, therefore, is only being attempted in a casual and perfunctory way.

It is of little use complaining that this work needs to be done and then quietly forgetting all about the problem. We must, without delay, do something in the direction indicated, or the next few years will witness in a more intensified form the disappointment and disillusionment which has followed the fortunes of the certificated blind teacher.

In my judgment there is no agency in the country nearly so well equipped for the task as is the National Institute for the Blind. In a limited way this organisation has already done something, but if it were given the necessary confidence to assume the essential

degree of authority, a most important and unexplored field of possibility and achievement would lie before it.

The Ministry of Health ought without delay to welcome such a development and give it such support as the project would appear to merit. I have no doubt that the Board of Education would look with approval on an effort of this description, designed essentially to secure results of a far-reaching and permanent character.

Legislation on behalf of the blind has now proceeded so far as to leave little doubt in the minds of those who are carefully observing its tendencies that the time must soon come when we must ask ourselves seriously :—how much farther along this road are we prepared to travel? The danger now is, in my judgment, not one of securing too little interference by statutory enactment, but rather is it one of getting too much law and too little freedom.

With the conclusion of this chapter my little essay is completed. All that I have been able to accomplish is to state in the briefest possible way how and why the voluntary system of providing for the blind has reached its present stage of development. I have perhaps laid exceptional stress upon the industrial side, examining in some detail the economic aspects of the problem. This, in my judgment, was essential by reason of the fact that there are certain symptoms of an undesirable character revealing themselves, which must, in the interests of real progress, be stayed if the best and truest elements in our economic life are to be preserved. The late Mr. Stopford Brooke in one of his delightful essays tritely observes :

“ Must all expenditure increase the material happiness of man? Are we never doing good except when we are providing for his outward wants, or giving him an education which will enable him to get on in the world? Even in

matters like food and dress, are we forced to restrain our expenditure to that which is absolutely necessary? Expenditure beyond the necessary on these things is certainly unproductive, but is it always useless? I answer that we are bound, not only to assist the poor, but also to charm our society, to show that we have thought of others by our desire to delight them. Within certain limits, expenditure on dress is useful in producing a social ease and charm. When it is entirely neglected in a household, for instance, it produces domestic quarrels, and it really means not only carelessness of person but carelessness of pleasing."

Sometimes I am disposed to feel that the rate of progress has been phenomenally slow. Yet, after all, when one considers the crude material from which the artificers have had to shape the ever-changing conditions, we stand amazed at the fact of so much solid achievement having been so steadily and systematically realised. This recognition, nevertheless, does not render one oblivious of the weaknesses and defects pervading the present system. I am very conscious of these shortcomings and anxious to facilitate radical changes so long as they can be made upon constructive lines, preserving all that is best in the system we know and eliminating only that which has become useless and obsolete.

In days of more limited experience, and in the long hours when one was obsessed with the desire to fashion a new world albeit with the material drawn from that very civilisation which one pretended to despise, I was strenuous in my advocacy of State intervention, but it is possible now to see that the danger ahead is likely to yield a measure of Government intervention wholly designed to whittle away all true freedom.

In the days when we dreamed of an Eldorado whose poetic imagery is only destined to find fruition in the Elysian fields of dreamland, vainly contemplated down the vista of years, we may secure all the glorious idealism of our youthful imagination—who shall say ?

To most of us there comes a time when we have but few illusions. The days that remain, though crowded with work and with the creation of opportunities for still more toil, have lost the glitter and glamour of the unachievable and the impossible. We have learned, sadly perhaps, to know that progress is attained only after an infinitude of painstaking and laborious toil, that the uplands are strewn with the dead leaves of remembrance, and that thorns more often than roses are discovered where we counted upon finding the fragrant flowers.

After all, these are but life's little ironies, sharply reminding us of our finite undertakings and the still more limited prescience with which we have been endowed.

When one is asked to-day concerning the functions of the State in relation to the blind community, I am less prepared than heretofore to hazard an opinion—the reason being that experience tends to make one less dogmatic than was formerly the case, and more inclined to weigh the evidence both for and against a given course of action or the enunciation of a policy. Being better informed, one is less positive in many directions and more critically constructive.

Those who have been carefully watching the development of local and national responsibility as it expresses itself in legislation on behalf of the blind, must have realised that the processes through which we have been evolving a more perfect system are of themselves so complex as to require considerable periods of time through which to fashion and perfect the instrument of the Statute. If it be true, as I see it,

that the State is becoming an immensely more powerful agency in all our lives, fashioning our conduct and moulding our outlook, it would appear to be equally certain that the humanitarian impulses to which we have heretofore been obedient will lose much of their impelling virtues. The great organism of the State with its machine-like operations will ticket and docket us with unerring punctiliousness. We must be mindful of the symptom we call "progress" lest it so inveigle us that we are dragooned and disciplined in such a manner as scarcely to make man distinguishable from the machine which he should guide and control.

[Copies of this publication can be obtained from the Secretary of the National Union of the Blind, 39 Stock Orchard Crescent, Holloway, London, N.7, or from the Sales Dépôt, National Institute for the Blind, 224-6-8 Great Portland Street, London, W.1; price 4/-]

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